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Health Professionals and Allied Employees

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Hudson Regional Has an Obligation to the Community, the Workers and the Courts

EMERSON—After weeks of Hudson Regional Health (HRH) pressuring policymakers to bail them out, the NJ Department of Health (DOH) has now responded to the hospital corporation reminding them that they made a commitment to the community, healthcare workers and the courts. Lawyers representing DOH detailed the specific obligations that were outlined in court documents and demanded HRH fulfill those legal obligations.

“The corporate owners of HRH have yet to show they are committed to investing in the hospitals they have taken over. Where are the capital improvements? Why have they not produced their plan to revitalize and stabilize their hospitals? It would be irresponsible of policymakers to write a check to HRH when they have not even fulfilled the commitment they made only a few months ago to invest in the operations and improvements needed at Heights University Hospital to turn this hospital around,” HPAE President Debbie White, RN, said.

Less than six months ago Hudson Regional Hospitals (HRH) committed, in bankruptcy court, to having sufficient funds to acquire and successfully operate the then bankrupt CarePoint system, including Christ Hospital, now Heights University Hospital, Bayonne Medical Center and Hoboken University Hospital. Hudson Regional bragged they had a plan and the financial stability to create a thriving system.

They also committed to the Judge and to the unions that represent their employees, that they would replenish the Paid Time Off (PTO) they had stolen from PTO banks, and make over a million dollars in delinquent employer contributions to HPAE members’ 401k retirement plans.

“Because HRH made assurances to a judge in court, neither the Department of Health nor

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the unions representing the employees objected to the transfer of ownership and confirmation of the plan for the system going forward. Now, Hudson Regional has done a complete about-face, reneging on the promises they made in court. They now claim they do not have the financial backing to operate Heights University Hospital (HUH) and must either close the hospital or drastically reduce services. But the Department of Health is holding them accountable,” White said.

“Hudson Regional sent lay-off notices to employees yet refuses to discuss their plan for HUH. Why? Because, we believe, they do not have a plan. Currently, we believe their plan is to simply threaten the N.J. Department of Health, lawmakers and the community with closure if they do not receive state funding,” White said.

HPAE is demanding to bargain over the layoffs, and has requested information pertaining to the closure, along with any plans HRH has developed for the future stability and enhancement of HUH. HPAE has yet to receive the information. HPAE is considering legal action to compel HRH to comply with the court’s incremental 401(k) payment order, which HRH has failed to honor.

² “The HRH plea for a bailout at this time begs the question: Did HRH ever really intend to keep Heights Hospital open, or do they have their eye on a different prize?” White said.

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HPAE is the largest union of registered nurses and health care professionals in New Jersey. Since its founding by Englewood Hospital nurses in 1974, HPAE has expanded across the state and into Southeastern Pennsylvania representing more than 15,000 nurses, social workers, therapists, technicians, medical researchers, and other health care professionals in hospitals, nursing homes, home care agencies, blood banks, and university research facilities. HPAE is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.

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