

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Historic Nursing Strike Averted as Brigham and Women’s Hospital Nurses Reach Tentative Agreement with BWH Saturday, June 25**

**Brigham Nurses Stood up for Patients and Their Profession, Ensuring Safe Staffing, Improving Security and Protecting New Nurse Benefits After Voting in Historic Numbers for One-Day Strike**

BOSTON, Mass. – The 3,300 Brigham and Women’s Hospital (BWH) nurses, represented by the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA), have reached a tentative agreement with the hospital that protects safe patient care, enhances hospital security, successfully fights off attempts to implement non-union benefits for new nurses and includes a fair wage increase.

“This is a huge victory for Brigham patients and the practice of nursing. The ultimate credit for this settlement goes to the 3,300 MNA nurses of Brigham & Women’s Hospital,” said Trish Powers, RN OR staff nurse and chair of the MNA BWH bargaining unit. “Brigham nurses stood together and were ready to hold an historic one-day strike for their patients, for our community and for the Brigham Way of excellent and safe patient care.”

“We are especially proud to have significantly improved security at the hospital for everyone,” Powers said. “Security was our top priority entering negotiations and we prevailed through hard-work, determination and the unity of 3,300 nurses.”

The tentative agreement, which still needs to be ratified by the full Brigham nurse membership, averts a one-day strike scheduled for June 27 that would have been the largest in Massachusetts history and the first in Boston in 30 years. Brigham nurses had planned to strike for 24 hours to ensure that safe patient care and Brigham nurses are valued more than the profits of BWH/Partners HealthCare.

MNA/Brigham nurses achieved major safe patient care victories through a months-long, concerted effort by well-organized staff nurses. Brigham nurses built up intense pressure on BWH/Partners to value patients over profits, starting publicly in May with a picket of more than 1,000 nurses and supporters.

While continuing to negotiate a new contract with the hospital, the 17-member elected nurse bargaining committee walked the halls of the hospital, talking to nearly all of the 3,300 Brigham nurses about their concerns and their willingness to stand up for their patients and profession by voting for a one-day strike. The resulting vote, on June 13, was the largest and most successful nurse strike vote in Massachusetts history.

“We are by far most proud of our success in standing up for our patients,” said Kelly Morgan, RN labor and delivery and vice chair of the MNA BWH bargaining unit. “Of course, the ultimate way to ensure excellent and safe patient care is maintaining quality core nurse staffing throughout the hospital, but this agreement is a positive step. The research on nurse staffing is irrefutable. When nurses spend more time with their patients, providing specialized care and education, those patients do better and are less likely to require re-admission to the hospital.”

*See some of the major nurse contract accomplishments:*

**Safe Staffing/NICU Alarms**

The hospital agreed to restore core nurse staffing levels to December 2015 levels, with flexibility depending on patient volume, acuity and other factors. A reduction in nurse staffing earlier this year jeopardized the safe care of some of the hospital’s sickest patients. Patients in the thoracic step-down unit on the 11th floor of the hospital have undergone lung transplant, heated chemotherapy and other serious procedures. They require constant, vigilant nursing care.

The hospital also agreed that mobile alarm devices planned for the NICU and devices with similar capabilities in other units would only be implemented after negotiations with and agreement of MNA/Brigham nurses. Nurses have significant concerns about these devices, including potentially dangerous delays in patient care due to alarms bouncing between nurses.

**Security**

Brigham nurses were forced to bring improved security to the bargaining table last fall following the tragic shooting death of a Brigham doctor. Nurses were also being assaulted at high rates throughout the hospital. Unfortunately, the hospital was not working with the nurses to consider and implement their security proposals, so they turned to contract negotiations and received assistance from the federal Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA).

OSHA sent two hazard letters to the hospital about security concerns and nurses delivered their message about hospital safety to the press and to lawmakers on Beacon Hill. The hospital ultimately agreed to a lengthy list of security improvements proposed by Brigham nurses, and has said it spent more than $2 million making the hospital more secure.

Significant security items included in the tentative agreement and/or improvements already made or pledged by the hospital:

* Improved access control at the BWH main campus and the Shapiro building
* Signs at all hospital entrances notify entrants that weapons are prohibited and video surveillance is in effect
* New weapons and ankle bracelet policies
* Additional panic alarms installed, with training for staff and regular testing
* Staff training to include online, live discussion and/or mock drills in areas such as personal safety, self-defense, security awareness, active shooter, threat assessment, de-escalation, SAFE response, Code Gray and/or crisis protocols
* Nurses affected by workplace violence will be contacted by supervisors as soon as reasonably possible and the hospital will assist nurses who have experienced a security incident in receiving reasonable medical attention and/or psychological care
* On request, the hospital will be available to meet with MNA representatives to discuss safety and security concerns, subject to patient privacy requirements

**Equal Benefits**

The hospital agreed to withdraw two proposals that nurses believe would have fostered a two-tiered, union-busting benefit system:

**Flex insurance** is a hospital-controlled health insurance program not subject to collective bargaining. Six years ago, the hospital lured nurses in with low rates and then part-time nurses saw their premiums double to quadruple in just one year.

**Benefit time** provides eight fewer days off per year than the traditional time-off system. It also takes away nurses’ choice on when and how to use different types of time off and forces them to use days they may not have otherwise used when taking time off under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

**Wages**

2% across-the-board for every MNA/Brigham nurse and 2.5% to a new top step for nurses currently at the top of the salary scale; all over three years

The three-year contract, if ratified by the full MNA/Brigham nurse membership, will have a start date of Oct. 1, 2015. The contract will expire Sept. 30, 2018. The deal was reached late Saturday, June 25 after 10 months and 23 negotiating sessions. Bargaining included the participation of a federal mediator. A vote of the full membership has yet to be scheduled.

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Founded in 1903, the Massachusetts Nurses Association/National Nurses United is the largest professional health care organization and the largest union of registered nurses in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Its 23,000 members advance the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the economic and general welfare of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Legislature and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public. The MNA is a founding member of National Nurses United, the largest national nurses’ union in the United States with more than 170,000 members from coast to coast.