

15K Minnesota nurses go on strike seeking better care for patients, more staff, and higher wages

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By John Bender

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Approximately 15,000 nurses in Minnesota went on strike on Monday morning after failing to come to an agreement on better working conditions. The nurses have said that they are striking for better and increased staff along with improved care for their patients.

The strike is against 13 hospitals in both Minneapolis-St. Paul and Duluth. The strike is scheduled to run for 3 days with the union confirming that the reasons for the strike are not financial and it is about necessary steps required to increase the quality of care.

“We are not on strike for our wages. We’re fighting for the ability to have some say over our profession and the work life balance,” said Mary Turner, the president of the Minnesota Nurses Association, which is the union waging the strike.

The unions said that working conditions continue to cause existing workers to quit and deter new ones from applying. The unions stated that several workers who quit would likely have stayed in their positions for the duration of their careers had it not been for the poor working conditions.

“The word has gotten out these are not attractive jobs the way they treat workers,” said Dennis Pierce, who is president of the union representing engineers. “Employees have said ‘I’ve had enough.’”

Chris Rubesh, who is a nurse at Essentia Health and is also Vice President of the Minnesota Nurses Association hit out at the disparity in wages.

“Corporate healthcare policies in our hospitals have left nurses understaffed and overworked, while patients are overcharged, local hospitals and services are closed, and executives take home million-dollar paychecks,” Rubesh said. “Nurses have one priority in our hospitals, to take care of our patients, and we are determined to fight for fair contracts so nurses can stay at the bedside to provide the quality care our patients deserve.”

The Minnesota Nurses Association have asked for a 30% increase in wages over the next three years, which senior staff in hospital have said they can’t meet. They have instead offered a 10-12% increase over the same period.