Jeff and Steve:

Please be advised that DCNA remains committed to utilizing the services of Marvin Johnson in mediation to reach an agreement on the successor collective bargaining agreement. DCNA will, however, proceed with plans of conducting an informational picket on January 13, 2022, to address staffing issues that have plagued the District of Columbia and the United States for years.

As I know you are aware, bargaining unit employees who attend an informational picket do so on their own time (either on a day off, approved annual leave or on a break). I assured you in our phone conversation that this informational picket is not related to the bargaining process and that our members will not be engaged in any strike activity on such date. The parties’ groundrules for negotiating a successor collective bargaining agreement provide that the parties will “not comment to the press on the status of negotiations (other than stating that they are ongoing), prior to the declaration of impasse.” I have assured you that DCNA will abide by these groundrules. DCNA has never agreed to waive our right to engage in informational picketing and we will not forego our representational duties to advocate for increased staffing or other matters that affect working conditions. Your letter suggests that DCNA has broken some agreement or promise as a condition of engaging in mediation. This is abjectly false. We remain committed to the mediation process and will not discuss with the press details of negotiations, other than stating that the negotiations are ongoing.

I find it illuminating that your correspondence refers to the NNU National Day of Action as a “so-called” day of action. Let me be clear: DCNA and NNU have tried to address staffing issues with employers and public officials for decades and will continue to do so. A day of action across the United States is necessary because staffing issues have worsened during this pandemic and it is important to educate the public regarding the need to adequately staff to improve patient safety and outcomes. Your correspondence also suggests that DCNA would be to blame if the public becomes aware of staffing problems at Howard University Hospital. This inference is spurious:  any informed citizen is most certainly aware that a staffing shortage exists in nearly every county and city in the Unites States, including the District of Columbia. Moreover, through various discussions with DCNA over the past several years, the Employer has recognized that staffing shortages have been an ongoing and consistent problem throughout many units at the hospital. The real question is can we together try to solve this issue?

I find it unfortunate that you chose combustible words like “grossly negligent” and “irresponsible” to describe DCNA’s planned legal action. Suffice it to say, I disagree with your choice of words. In fact, I believe that it may be negligent and irresponsible not to raise awareness of staffing concerns. In any event, should you continue to refuse to engage in mediation, I encourage you to respond to DCNA’s proposal, dated November 23, 2021, in which DCNA requested that management reconsider its last, best and final offer and continue to negotiate in further efforts to reach an agreement on the successor CBA.

Sincerely,

Ed Smith

DCNA

Sent via email – 1/6/22