



Committee on Health

United Medical Center Oversight Hearing

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA NURSES ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY, February 6, 2019

The District of Columbia Nurses Association (DCNA), an affiliate of the National Nurses United, AFL-CIO, is a full-service professional organization and labor union solely dedicated to representing health care professionals in the District of Columbia. With approximately 2,000 members, DCNA advances the health care profession by fostering high standards of practice, promoting the economic and general welfare of employees in the workplace and lobbying District officials regarding health care issues. DCNA represents approximately over 200 registered nurses employed by the United Medical Center.

My name is Wala Blegay and I am the staff attorney for DCNA. I would like to report an improved relationship between DCNA and the management team at UMC. While there has been delay in some of the labor concerns of DCNA, we have been able to meet and work through many personnel issues.

However, there are still concerns of high nurse-patient ratios and lack of support from ancillary staff. While the management of the hospital has improved, the ratios

must improve for UMC to be considered a quality hospital. Currently, nurses are unable to provide the care required for the patients if they are forced to service multiple high acuity patients at once. Nurses at UMC are currently experiencing inadequate staffing, which is dangerous and only serves as a detriment to the patients.

In the past several months, DCNA has received report that the nurses in the telemetry/cardiac unit had close to seven (7) patients per nurse in a unit where the safe number of patients per nurse should not be more than five nurses. The Emergency room at UMC is working with dangerous ratios and without adequate technical support. Overall, nurse management is not providing an environment where safe care can be delivered. A manager from ICU, Dr. Isabel Shephard, informed us that it was safe for a nurse in ICU to have four (4) patients. This is extremely dangerous and you would not want any of your family members in ICU with a nurse who has three other patients. The Behavioral Health unit is unsafe which has caused a very dangerous working condition. There is often no ancillary staff which would often leave two nurses for the entire unit. Most of the patients in the Behavioral Health Unit are suicidal, violent, aggressive, and the lack of adequate staff can result in the danger for the nurses.

From the data for January 2019 Assignment Despite Objections sent to DCNA,

The nurses have stated the following:

- Given an assignment that pose a serious threat to my health and safety- 45%
- Caseload excessive and interferes with delivery of adequate patient care - 85%
- Not given adequate staff for acuity - 100%
- Not provided with adequate assistive personnel - 100%.

I have attached the recommended safe patient ratios for each unit. DCNA and the UMC nurses are dedicated to quality patient care and successful patient outcomes and we know that safe nurse patient ratios for more nurses will guarantee quality care.

Additionally, DCNA is gravely concerned that the UMC nurses who have dedicated the careers to the health care of Wards 7 and 8 residents will not be protected at the new hospital. DCNA has represented the UMC nurses since the nineties and most of our nurses have continued their service to Wards 7 and 8 through two bankruptcies, insufficient staffing, inadequate equipment, inefficient management, no support staff and more. Regardless of the conditions of UMC, our nurses have always told me that they stayed at the hospital because they are dedicated to your community. We are in the midst of a nurse shortage where nurses can work anywhere in the area but UMC has a special group of nurses who have committed their careers to ensuring that you and your neighbors are healthy. We request that the employment of the nurses from UMC are smoothly transitioned to East End Hospital with the same pay, seniority and benefits; East End Hospital maintain the Collective Bargaining Agreements for the transitioned employees and that operator of the East End Hospital bargain in good faith with the unions representing the transitioned employees. Our members have dedicated their careers to the District through good and challenging times and as this committee has supported the nurses at UMC before, we look forward to your support today.

Walakewon Blegay, Esq.

Staff Attorney & Labor Specialist, DCNA

Safe Nurse/Patient Ratio

Below are the safe minimum ratios for each unit.

| <i>Unit</i> | <i>RN to Patients</i> |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Intensive/Critical Care</i> | 1:2 |
| Operating Room | 1:1 |
| Post-anesthesia Recovery | 1:2 |
| Labor and Delivery | 1:2 |
| Antepartum | 1:4 |
| Postpartum couplets | 1:4 |
| Postpartum women only | 1:6 |
| Emergency Room | 1:4 |
| ICU Patients in the ER | 1:2 |
| Trauma Patients in the ER | 1:1 |
| Telemetry | 1:5 |
| Medical/Surgical | 1:6 |
| Skilled Nursing Facility | 1:10 |
| Dialysis | 1:2 |
| Dialysis: Isolation | 1:1 |
| Psychiatric | 1:6 |