

MEDIA ADVISORY

Note for morning shows: Nurses will be available for live interviews beginning around 6:30 a.m. Highlight for morning coverage: 7:00 a.m. when the night shift walks out to join the picketlines and the strike begins.

Spanish-speaking RNs will be available for interviews from around 6:30 a.m. on.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Registered Nurses & Health Care Workers Launch Five-Day Strike Against Prime's St. Francis Medical Center

"They make short staffing a standard of care here and it's just really sad for the community." –Scott Byington, RN

LOS ANGELES – Nearly all essential medical personnel at St. Francis Medical Center will walk out at 6:30 a.m. on Monday, October 9, to join the strike lines against Prime Healthcare (which owns hospitals in fourteen states), where they will march, picket, and chant for five days to protest chronically dangerous short staffing and patient care practices, along with unfair labor practices like bad faith bargaining, threats, and attacks on workers' rights.

St. Francis has been bleeding registered nurses since Prime bought the hospital in 2020.

- 2017 – 2019 – RN turnover at St. Francis was 24.01%
- 2022 – National average for RN turnover was 22.5%
- 2020 – 2022 – RN turnover at St. Francis more than doubled to 50.42%
- The average replacement cost of one RN is \$46,000.
- St. Francis RNs have filed more than 6,000 staffing objection forms with California's Department of Public Health just since June of this year—each one representing an instance when a unit and shift were short-staffed in violation of California's safe nurse-to-patient ratios.
- The National Institutes of Health discovered that adding one patient to a nurse's caseload raises the probability of patient death by 7%. *

All of this adds up to dangerous, unsafe patient care. The nurses will speak out about the dangers.

The striking workers include 600 registered nurses represented by UNAC/UHCP and 900 other health care workers represented by SEIU-UHW: nursing assistants, medical assistants, vocational nurses, emergency room technicians, respiratory therapists, environmental services aides, and more.

St. Francis Medical Center is one of the busiest hospitals in Los Angeles County, with the only level II trauma, stroke, and STEMI center for many miles around. Ripple effects from this strike will spread throughout LA County to other trauma centers, from Harbor UCLA to St. Mary's in Long Beach, from County USC to UCLA and Cedars-Sinai.

WHAT: Registered Nurses and allied health care workers strike St. Francis Medical Center

WHEN: **Strike Launch: Monday, October 4, 2023**
6:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Duration of strike—five days:
Monday, October 9 – Friday, October 10
Strikers return to work 6:30 a.m. Saturday, October 11

WHERE: **St. Francis Medical Center—in front of the hospital**
3630 E. Imperial Hwy, Lynwood, CA 90262
Imperial Highway & Martin Luther King, Blvd

VISUALS: **Hundreds of nurses and other health care workers** in scrubs, uniforms, union gear, with allies, marching and chanting with picket signs

Nurses and health care workers available to tell their stories about the patient care hazards at St. Francis and how they're fighting for safer patient care. Spanish-speaking spokespeople available.

NOTE: This strike is unrelated to the strike by 75,000 health care workers against Kaiser Permanente, which ends on October 7.

BACKGROUND

UNAC/UHCP and SEIU-UHW have been in negotiations with Prime for new contracts at St. Francis Medical Center since June. The two unions held a joint informational picket on August 29.

Prime bought SFMC through bankruptcy in 2020, terminated 20% of the experienced RNs, cut RN pay by 12%, and instituted a three-year wage freeze—during the pandemic, even as RNs risked their lives every day with inadequate PPE. Now the hospital is dangerously understaffed nearly every day on every shift. RN turnover since Prime took control has been over 50%. Prime owns hospitals in fourteen states.

St. Francis has always been profitable and in fact propped up its prior owner, Verity, which went bankrupt not because of St. Francis. Since Prime's purchase and cost cutting, St. Francis is more profitable than ever, with profit margins now over 20%.

Still, Prime's RN and other wages are the lowest in the community—which Prime management admitted at the bargaining table.

Prime has rejected every proposal nurses have made for safer patient care: commitments to following Title XXII's nurse-to-patient ratios; training for new nurses *before* they're assigned to critical care units like ICU and ER, rather than after they've been thrown into these challenging, chaotic units; rules for nurses to float (take a temporary assignment) only to units for which they have been trained, and more.

During the pandemic, Prime was unable to provide PPE for RNs, who were forced to bring in their own. Still, Prime even rejected a proposal to allow RNs to bring their own PPE in the future *should Prime not be able to provide it*—even though this proposal would cost Prime nothing.

Low wages, short staffing, and hostile working conditions = astronomical RN turnover—over 50%.

* https://unacuhcp.org/wp-content/uploads/UNACUHCP_Research_Nursing_Shortage_2022_final-003.pdf

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[United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals \(UNAC/UHCP\)](#) represents more than 35,000 registered nurses and health care professionals in California and Hawaii, including optometrists; pharmacists; physical, occupational and speech therapists; case managers; nurse midwives; social workers; clinical lab scientists; physician assistants and nurse practitioners; hospital support and technical staff. UNAC/UHCP is affiliated with the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO.