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Nurses Sound the Alarm about the Future of St. Joseph's Medical Center under New For-Profit Owner, Prime Healthcare

Joliet, IL—The future of St. Joseph's Medical Center in Joliet is in danger, according to registered nurses (RNs) at the hospital who are represented by the Illinois Nurses Association (INA). At a press conference on May 4, the nurses demanded accountability and answers for why the company has repeatedly cut services and implemented unsafe staffing changes since acquiring St. Joseph's in March of 2025.

"Prime buys up small hospitals and cuts everything that isn't making them money. Communities are left without health care," said Amber Velasquez, a cardiac nurse at St. Joseph's and elected union steward. "We're worried about the future of our hospital."

Nurses warn that recent changes at St. Joseph's may signal worse to come, citing Prime Healthcare's history of cutting unprofitable services at acquired hospitals, closing units, and even shuttering entire hospitals. At Suburban Community Hospital in Pennsylvania, Prime repeatedly slashed services and instituted layoffs until all that was left was one outpatient behavioral clinic in a hospital that once had a capacity of over 200 beds.

Despite testifying to the Health Facilities and Services Review Board (HFSRB) that there would be no loss of service upon acquiring St. Joseph's, **Prime Healthcare has repeatedly reduced, suspended, or eliminated services, while also cutting staff levels across the hospital since March 2025:**

- May 2025: Prime indefinitely "suspended" all inpatient pediatric care—the only such services in all Joliet. The unit has remained unopened.
- May 2025: Prime effectively increased patient assignments for RNs in the Physical Medical Rehabilitation unit to 7 patients per nurse (INA recommends safe staffing ratio of 1:4 in these units).
- July 2025- March 2026: Prime closed a 30-bed "Acute Care for the Elderly" unit
- Feb. 2026: Prime again increased nurse to patient ratios, despite nurses and physicians' safety objections. Almost every unit saw ratios increase by 1-2 patients.
- March 2026: Prime closed a Post-Surgical unit indefinitely.
- April 2026: Prime introduced a staffing change requiring RNs to split patient care with nurses operating at lower licensure levels. This effectively doubles the number of patients being cared for under some RNs' licenses.

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- Although St. Joseph is licensed for 489 beds, the hospital only runs 185-195 due to Prime's lack of investment in services they claim the community does not need.

Due to these conditions, **more than 110 nurses have left St. Joseph's since Prime took over the hospital.**

"Prime's actions are 'death by a thousand cuts' for the patients and staff at St. Joseph's," said Cathie Wolff, a dialysis nurse at St. Joseph's and INA board representative. "We have to defend our hospital before it's too late."

"Across Illinois, we're already seeing the consequences of Prime cutting critical services that patients rely on every day: delaying care, reducing access, and putting lives at risk. We cannot allow corporate decisions to hollow out our healthcare system," said **State Senator Karina Villa**, who will be advocating this week in Springfield for a bill to hold companies like Prime accountable. "HB 4757 will restore accountability and ensure patients, not profits, come first, by protecting access to the care our communities depend on."

The INA, which represents 584 nurses at St. Joseph's, has filed federal charges against Prime for failing to answer questions about the impact of staff and service changes on nurses and patients. Nurses are now **calling on the community to demand Prime stop closing units and invest in their local hospital.** Community members can sign the petition at <https://bit.ly/HoldPrimeAccountable>.

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The Illinois Nurses Association is the nursing union in the State of Illinois, providing professional representation, improving wages and terms and conditions of employment for nurses and healthcare workers in bargaining units represented by the INA. For more information about the INA, visit <http://www.illinoisnurses.com>.