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Nurses at St. Joseph Medical Center marched on corporate owners to condemn staffing proposals that would endanger patients and reduce patient care.

Prime Healthcare is proposing staff-level reductions at St. Joseph Medical Center that would compromise the health and safety of patients, according to nurses who recently petitioned the company to end its unsafe staffing practices. Prime's proposal would mark the second time they have cut nursing staffing levels since their takeover of the hospital in March 2025.

"When fewer nurses are staffed per shift, patients don't receive the time and care they need," said Cathie Wolff, dialysis nurse and Chief Steward of St. Joseph Nurses Association (SJNA), the local nurses union. "Prime's new proposal shows they only care about the bottom line, not their patients' lives."

On January 29th, 2026, two dozen nurses throughout the facility marched into Prime's monthly staffing and acuity meeting to demand that patient care be made a priority when reviewing the latest cuts to staffing levels.

Prime's proposal was first shared with nurses on January 12th, 2026 by Chief Nursing Officer Terrell Neal, who has since left the organization. These proposals make cuts to nursing staff by removing additional nurses off each shift's schedule. This means nurses are assigned more patients, leading to less time spent with each patient and an increased risk to patient safety as nurses are spread thin.

Prime's current staffing levels have already pushed staff to their breaking points, as nurses are expected to take the maximum number of patients with minimal resources and supplies such as clean linen for patients.

Prior to Prime's takeover of the hospital, nurses had a contractually provided right to play a democratic role in ensuring their patient ratios were manageable for the nurses in each unit. After Prime's first reduction of staffing levels in May 2025, it became clear that Prime was willing to unilaterally violate these contractual obligations and reduce nurse staffing regardless of nurse input. The new proposal would reduce the number of nurses working on any given shift per unit by 1-2 nurses meaning more patients for every nurse's case load and less time spent with each patient.

"If I'm taking six patients, that's roughly ten minutes per hour with one patient, that's nothing," said Amber Velasquez, an elected union steward for SJNA and cardiac nurse, stated, "We have family members concerned about why there isn't more staff."

This is not the first time since Prime Healthcare acquired St. Joseph Medical Center, that cuts were made to staffing— and the corporation often employs cost-cutting "work-arounds" that only add to the work assigned to nurses. Certified nursing assistants were removed from the intensive

care unit (ICU) because they were not a part of “Prime’s model.” Licensed practical nurses (LPNs), who have a limited “scope of practice” based on their credentialing have been hired with disregard for the added workload of Registered Nurses (RNs) who have to take on tasks that LPNs cannot perform or supervise their work. Technicians are actively replacing nurses in the dialysis department. Prime Healthcare has time and time again prioritized saving pennies over the lives of patients and staff.

In solidarity, nurses marched in and collectively voiced their concerns of how reckless Prime Healthcare is treating the patients of this community. A petition was delivered to the interim CNO and other leadership demanding that Prime staff the hospital safely, with the focus being on patients and not profits.

Despite the nurses unanimously rejecting these staffing proposals and encouraging the CNO to not pass them, we were told that these would be implemented as of Monday, February 2nd.

The 584 nurses at St. Joseph are represented by the St. Joseph Nurses Association, a unit of the Illinois Nurses Association, an independent union representing health care workers in Illinois.

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>.