



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Sean M. Ryan

Senators Sean Ryan, Tim Kennedy, And Senate Colleagues Push Catholic Health To Deliver Fair Contract

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Senators' Letter Outlines Healthcare Workers' Sacrifices And The Need For A Contract That Will Support Adequate Staffing Levels

BUFFALO – Today, October 13, 2021, New York State Senators Sean Ryan and Tim Kennedy, and 24 of their Senate colleagues, sent a letter urging Catholic Health Systems to negotiate a contract for their workers that will enable Mercy Hospital of Buffalo to attract and retain the staff needed to guarantee the highest quality patient care.

More than 2,000 employees of the South Buffalo hospital and Mercy Ambulatory Care Center, its Orchard Park division, have been on strike for nearly two weeks as they await a new contract. The striking workers are members of Communications Workers of America, a union that represents about 2,500 employees at Catholic Health facilities in Western New York. No-strike clauses at the other facilities are preventing workers from other Catholic Health hospitals from joining the strike, but workers at Kenmore Mercy Hospital and Sisters of Charity Hospital - St. Joseph Campus are bargaining jointly with Mercy Hospital of Buffalo employees.

The workers' primary focus in the negotiations is centered on creating safe staffing levels at the hospital after months of operating with insufficient staffing and resources. In the letter, the senators note that Catholic Health workers have reported working through lunch hours and breaks to ensure their patients received the care they required amid staffing shortages. The senators assert that, by refusing to agree to a contract that values the dedication shown by their employees, Catholic Health will only exacerbate the staffing issues they share with healthcare facilities around the country.

Senator Sean Ryan said, "Throughout the pandemic, our nation's healthcare workers have put their own health and safety at risk in service of others, and Americans have celebrated these workers as the heroes they are. But the appreciation they have gotten from the public must be accompanied by support from their employers. If Catholic Health wants to maintain the high level of patient care that their employees have consistently delivered in the face of mounting challenges, they need to provide the resources that these heroes need in order to guarantee their own well-being."

Senator Tim Kennedy said, "At its core, this is about ensuring Mercy Hospital's essential workers have the resources they need to deliver the highest standard of care. After months of risking their own health and safety, and putting their own lives on the line every day, these workers more than deserve that commitment. Catholic Health's management must come to the table to negotiate a fair contract; anything less is unacceptable."

[Click here to view a PDF of the legislators' letter.](#)