

Jobs With Justice & Interfaith Worker Justice Workers Rights Board Report

On February 1, 2018, a JWW/IWJ Workers Rights Board, composed of the undersigned was convened at the Oak Ridge Civic Center, Oak Ridge Tennessee. The purpose of this hearing was to hear testimony from Members of SEIU Local 205 employed at Methodist Medical Center (MMC). After due deliberation the Board issues the following findings and recommendations:

- The Hospital and the Union have a long relationship in our community that has benefited us all.
- It is clear from testimony that the Union is sincerely trying to reach an agreement with MMC.
- We are concerned MMC has not been willing to share what appears to be information that would help parties reach an agreement, especially since Union has demonstrated their willingness to work on tough issues like they did around insurance in 2014.
- We support the Union's goal of equitable cost sharing and reasonable health insurance benefits for MMC employees. The testimony showed there have been clear cost savings from the changes negotiated in 2015, and what the Union seeks is in line with what other Covenant Hospitals provide
- We agree with the concept that health care providers, like Covenant and MMC should lead by example in providing the lowest cost care to employees at their facilities.
- We agree that safe staffing is critical to patients and employees. The MMC staff that testified are clearly dedicated and committed to providing the best care possible. We commend them for standing up for reasonable staffing and not accepting what they believe based on their collective experience are unsafe patient staff ratios,
- We applaud the Union's initiative to implement a collaborative process to address staffing and workload issues on an ongoing basis.
- We appreciate and respect the workers concern for limits on work hours and their desire for adequate time off work to rest and recharge and take care of family and others. Their jobs requires employees be at their best
- We are concerned with MMC's proposal for future employees pay. It is hard to see where setting rates back to what they were 8 years ago is justifiable or wise. Other costs have not gone down, and we heard testimony that some workers at MMC are already stretched to make ends meet and we can't imagine how workers earning substantially less will be able to support themselves and their families.
- These are the middle class and working class jobs of today. They are what support communities like Oak Ridge. Local wage earners like those at MMC help fuel our economy by spending locally.

- We also recognize that lower wages can hurt recruitment and retention of the best employees.
- Our collective experience with two tier wages is that such schemes create more issues than they solve including:
 - the adverse impact on overall morale and teamwork in the workplace
 - the likely pressure to reduce the top tier pay over time rather than raise the lower tier
 - the failure of management to lead by example. Often management does not experience the same reductions as rank and file.
 - They do not address other root causes that affect an employer's operation (they are just a band-aid (pun intended))
- MMC employees are the front line care givers and the face of the hospital. In our opinion they are MMC's most valuable asset when it comes to patient well being and care.
- We urge MMC to be forthcoming with the information Union seeks
- We ask that MMC bargain with the Union in good faith to reach an agreement, that includes addressing the workers' basic and reasonable demands.

Dated: February 1, 2018

Respectfully submitted,

Garry Ferraris, Chairperson

Gloria Johnson

Tom Burns

Ellen Smith

Chris Beatty

Danielle Mitchell, M.D.

Thomas Duncan

Kathy Mays