

Union Contract Covering 1,800 URMHC Workers Set To Expire Monday

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK , USA, October 27, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Union Contract covering 1,800 Caregivers & Service Workers at New York's Sixth Largest Employer, URMHC Will Expire Monday 10/30 If No Agreement is Reached

Healthcare & Service Workers Demand Living Wage To Recruit & Retain More Staff While Leaders At University of Rochester Have Seen Their Salaries Nearly Double In Recent Years

Last Month 98.5% of Voting Union Members Authorized The Bargaining Committee To Issue A 10-Day Notice For Informational Picket Following Multiple Contract Extensions

Following multiple contract extensions, the collective bargaining agreement covering more than 1,800 service workers at University of Rochester

Medical Center (URMC) is set to expire Monday, October 30th at midnight. The unions and management remain at odds over living wage increases and quality benefits to recruit and retain more workers to provide care and services to the hospital and University.

The pending contract expiration comes after several months of negotiations, including 22 day-long bargaining sessions between 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, 200United SEIU and the University of Rochester Medical Center. Contract talks between the two unions and management began late August (8/22).

"The heroes are still here, but the respect and pay is not," said Dana Allison, Patient Care

1199SEIU
United Healthcare Workers East



Unions Bargaining With URMHC

Technician at University of Rochester Medical Center's Strong Memorial Hospital.

Patient caregivers and service workers employed at Strong Memorial Hospital are represented by 1199SEIU, United Healthcare Workers East, and service workers at the University of Rochester are represented by 200United SEIU. Both unions are working together to negotiate one agreement that includes fair wage increases that respect the high level of service and support provided throughout the hospital and campus. Better wages and a quality comprehensive benefit package will also help to retain and recruit more workers and alleviate staffing problems across URMC.

A family of three (with one child) where both adults are working must earn \$19.16 per hour or more to earn a living wage in Monroe County.[1] At URMC, the state's sixth largest employer and the largest employer in Rochester, hundreds of caregivers and service workers are earning considerably less while top leaders are earning millions. University of Rochester must do better by its workers to provide a living wage that helps to recruit and retain workers into sustainable long term healthcare jobs amid shortages across the state. URMC leaders must factor in the cost of healthcare, transportation, childcare and other needs workers must have in place to maintain their employment and care for their families. Care team workers who ensure the health & safety of patients and students in our community earning less than a living wage include nursing assistants, environmental service workers, cashiers, caterers, food service workers, and nutrition assistants.

This month, 98.5% of voting union members at URMC voted in favor of giving their bargaining committee the authority to issue a 10-day notice for an informational picket should workers not be able to reach an agreement. The labor dispute at Rochester's largest employer is not the first in the area. The public labor dispute with URMC comes as Nurses at Rochester General recently ratified a 42-month agreement, averting a second strike over wages and staffing.[2]

URMC has spent millions purchasing buildings & increasing salaries for its top leaders as caregivers and service workers fight for a living wage. Since 2020, University of Rochester and its affiliates have invested more than \$74 million dollars in real estate purchases including College Town[3]. In 2021, during the COVID pandemic, URMC's top leaders earned sizeable salaries ranging from \$543,000 to \$3.3 million dollars per year (including deferred compensation).[4] It's time that URMC invest in workers who provide the care and services that keep our hospital and campus community healthy.

With top leaders earning so much, even the lowest paid worker at URMC deserves to earn a living wage that allows them to provide for themselves and their families. "As a 34-year employee, I want to feel respected for the hard work we do" said Wendell Broadhurst, Environmental Services Work Leader at URMC's River Campus. "It's time that all workers get the dignity and respect they deserve on the job and we won't settle for less," said Broadhurst.

"Investing in workers and providing a living wage is critical to ensuring that we have enough staff

to provide a high level of patient care and student services to our community,” said Tracey Harrison, 1199SEIU Vice-President for Rochester Corning. “Staffing is a problem across the hospital and campus. URMCMust invest more in retaining and recruiting workers,” said Harrison.

This month, members from both labor unions participated in Meliora Weekend events to let the public know about their contract dispute. Hundreds of URMCM alumnae and supporters signed an [online public petition](#) demanding that URMCM agree to a fair contract settlement for its workers.

Contract negotiations are set to resume at the URMCM’s Strong Memorial Hospital on Monday, October 30th at 9:00 AM. Caregivers and service workers will hold a press conference on Monday at 8:30 AM at 1199SEIU, 259 Monroe Ave, Suite 220 in Rochester to update the public on contract negotiations and the pending expiration of the contract.

On Background:

Workers represented by SEIU Local 200United at the University of Rochester include Building Services, Dining Services, Porters, Cooks, Stack Attendants – Library, Catering Service Assistants, Bus Drivers, Truck Drivers, and Stockkeepers.

Caregivers represented by 1199SEIU at Strong Memorial Hospital include Environmental Service Workers, Nursing Assistants, Cooks, Food Service Workers, Dietary Workers, Dental Assistants, Drivers, Patient Care Technicians, Materials Processing Specialists, Patient Unity Secretaries, Porters, Stockkeepers, Transport Assistants, Transportation Center Workers, Truck Drivers, and Unit Support Assistants.

A Federal Mediator from Federal Mediation Conciliation Services joined negotiations on the first day. To date, the employer and unions have met a total of 22 times, making tentative agreements on non-economic items.

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1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East is the largest and fastest-growing healthcare union in America. We represent over 400,000 nurses and caregivers throughout Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Florida. Our mission is to achieve quality care and good jobs for all. <https://www.1199seiu.org>

SEIU Local 200United, a union of thousands of members who are working people striving for fair and just workplaces and communities. We represent two million members in New York, Vermont, and Pennsylvania in the public and private sector. <https://www.seiu200united.org>

[1] Living Wage Calculator - Living Wage Calculation for Rochester, NY (mit.edu)
(<https://livingwage.mit.edu/metros/40380>)

[2] Five-day RGH nurses strike averted: Tentative deal reached on union contract | WHAM (13wham.com) (<https://13wham.com/news/local/five-day-rgh-nurses-strike-averted-deal-reached-on-tentative-union-contract>)

[3] University of Rochester purchases College Town : News Center (<https://www.rochester.edu/newscenter/university-of-rochester-purchases-college-town-563772/>)

[4] University Of Rochester - Full Filing- Nonprofit Explorer – ProPublica (<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/160743209/202331329349307748/full>)

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