

May 15, 2013

Dear [nurse's name]:

Today, the Medical Center presented its last, best and final offer to the MNA bargaining committee. In light of the MNA's surprising, premature declaration that negotiations are at impasse, we believe we had an obligation to present the best offer we could now to avert a strike and reach a fair agreement. The words "last, best and final" are significant as they are intended to convey clearly to the MNA that the offer will not be enhanced, regardless of whether or not a strike occurs. The offer is a very fair one that is consistent with agreements reached with all our other unions. The last, best and final offer includes:

- An increase to the wage scale over three years of 1 percent in year one, 1.5 percent in year two, and 2 percent in year three, with the result that due to step increases, many nurses can expect increases of 5 percent in year one, 5.5 percent in year two and 6 percent in year three
- A cap on the number of patients that can be assigned to a registered nurse of no more than five patients on the day shift, an average of five patients but no more than six patients on the evening shift, and no more than six patients on the night shift
- Meaningful limitations on the number of patients that can be assigned to a resource nurse
- Additional nurses in areas where they are needed such as maternity, NICU and the ED
- Restrictions on subcontracting during the term of the agreement
- The same change in the defined benefit pension formula experienced by other employees
- Slight changes in time-off accruals and health insurance contributions for new hires
- Agreements on 18 MNA proposals

The Medical Center also informed the MNA that the proposal would be modified Friday at noon should the MNA not accept the last, best and final offer by then. Specifically, the proposed wage increases would decrease to 1 percent per year, and the pension formula would also be modified so as to include less compensation in the definition of pensionable earnings.

I want you to know that the changes to the Medical Center's proposal that will occur Friday at noon are not in any way intended to be punitive. As we explained to the MNA, the Medical Center will begin to incur significant costs for replacement nurses beginning Friday afternoon (approximately 4.7 million dollars on Friday/Saturday alone). That change in circumstances is what drives the change in the Medical Center's offer. The money that the Medical Center has allotted to these negotiations is not limitless, and as a result, if some of those funds must be spent on replacement nurses, there will be less to dedicate to the contract settlement. I would much rather spend the money on our nurses.

Unfortunately, I am concerned that some people believe that a brinkmanship strategy will force the Medical Center to enhance its last, best and final offer or that the offer (in its present form) will still be available after Friday. I am also concerned that these same people believe that the Medical Center will not honor its contractual commitment to the replacement staffing agency and return striking nurses to work after one day. I can assure you that these people are simply wrong on both accounts. It would be irresponsible for the Medical Center to pay the costs of these replacement nurses and return striking nurses to work before the expiration of the five-day period.

It is time to settle this contract and move forward together as we face the many challenges coming to health care. Please visit www.umassmemorialchange.org if you would like to see the actual last, best and final offer made to the MNA.

We sincerely value the contributions our nurses provide to the excellent care received by our patients, and we hope this can continue uninterrupted. I sincerely hope that the MNA will accept the fair offer presented to it by Friday, and I would urge you to let the MNA know your views.

I urge you to continue to reference umassmemorialchange.org for the most up-to-date information relative to our negotiations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric W. Dickson, MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Eric Dickson, MD, MHCM, FACEP
President and Chief Executive Officer
UMass Memorial Health Care