

***the following was sent to ARH trustee Rep L. Combs and the editors of The Hazard Herald (KY), and The Charleston Gazette (WV).***

I am a Registered Nurse in New York who has fought the same fight for patient safety as ARH nurses now are fighting. Despite ARH spokesperson Candace Elkins' attempt to distract from the issues by pointing fingers at "outside unions", those nurses walking the line in support of the striking nurses are not "outsiders". They are fellow union sisters and brothers - nurses of the national RN union, the United American Nurses union - and we are all members of the AFL-CIO. We've been where they are and we stand with them now.

Nurses everywhere understand how important the issues of safe staffing and safe patient care are for us and for our patients, no matter which state we are in. Our demand for safe staffing is supported by an abundance of research which shows that patient complications and deaths in the hospital are directly related to Registered Nurse staffing levels.

For nurses to be forced to go to such lengths as striking in order to wake our employers up to this fact, and for us to actually have to fight them for our patients' safety, is a public health travesty. ARH may be throwing away millions of dollars on expert union-busting "consultants", and strike-busting "replacements". But just a fraction of that money could easily have paid for the safe-staffing improvements that the nurses need in order to do their jobs safely and to provide the best quality patient care. Such blatant waste of valuable resources by a hospital, at the community's expense, is beyond disgraceful.

The public should be outraged when administrators of their local hospital are so willing to take such risks with patient lives that they refuse to provide safe RN staffing levels. Patients must come before profits.

In solidarity,

Julie Semente, RN  
New York City