

What is the status of the nurse negotiations?

Negotiations began in January and despite persistent efforts, a final agreement was not reached by June 30, the end of the existing contract. In July, the bargaining teams continued to negotiate. When the teams were unable to reach agreement by June 30, the Michigan Medicine bargaining team requested assistance from the state mediator.

What has happened since the state mediator began working with the bargaining teams?

The most recent mediation sessions in August and September have not been successful in helping the parties to reach a final agreement. In July, UMPNC petitioned for fact-finding, and in late-August, Michigan Medicine also filed its own petition for fact-finding.

What is the difference between a work stoppage and a strike?

There is no difference between a work stoppage and a strike. Both involve a collective, concerted unauthorized absence from work.

Is it legal for nurses at the University of Michigan to strike?

No. Nurses are considered “public employees” under the Michigan Public Employee Relations Act (“PERA”), PERA Section 2, specifically states “A public employee shall not strike...”

If nurses are prohibited from striking by law, how can they resolve the disputed issues in their contract negotiations?

Because strikes are prohibited for public employees, fact finding is the dispute resolution process that is available for public employees (excluding public safety personnel, such as police and fire fighters, who have a different dispute resolution process available). As mentioned above, both UMPNC and Michigan Medicine have filed petitions for fact finding in an effort to move contract negotiations toward completion.

What is fact finding?

The Michigan Employment Relations Commission appoints a neutral third party (a fact finder) to take testimony and evidence, and hear both sides of the remaining disputed issues. The fact finder will produce a report containing written recommendations on each disputed issue, and the written recommendations are intended to assist the parties in settling their contract.

How many votes does UMPNC need in order to authorize a strike?

According to UMPNC Bylaws, this is based on the number of nurses who are present at UMPNC meetings. The union needs a majority vote, or 51% of those voting, to be able to authorize a strike in the future.

Are UMPNC members required to vote?

No. Meeting attendance and voting is strictly up to each individual nurse. Nurses who vote may choose not to participate in a strike if one is called.

If UMPNC is able to authorize a strike after membership voting, what is the process to initiate a strike?

If UMPNC is able to reach a majority vote for strike authorization, the union's bylaws require it to provide Michigan Medicine leadership ten days' notice prior to a planned strike. Because it is illegal for public employees to strike, Michigan Medicine will take legal action to avoid a strike.

What will happen if nurses decide to strike?

If a nurse opts to strike, the unit management will report this to HITS. Employees who strike will be denied access to the Michigan Medicine network, their email, and badge access to secured locations. Additionally, employees will not be paid for the duration of the strike. Depending on the timing of a strike, employees who strike could be responsible for additional health insurance premium costs.

How will other employees be affected if nurses strike?

All other employees are expected to come to work as usual. Any further instructions will be provided by your immediate supervisor.

How will Michigan Medicine continue operations if the nurses strike?

Leaders in the health system have a comprehensive continuity of operations plan in place in the event of a strike. Michigan Medicine remains committed to patient safety during any union activity, and will do everything possible to maintain the highest quality of care during a strike.

Will additional security be available to ensure that employees coming to work are safe?

Michigan Medicine is actively working with Security and Campus Police to develop a plan that will ensure employees, including nurses, can come to work and cross the picket line safely.

In past negotiations prior to 2011, nurses have received retroactive pay increases when contract ratification is delayed. Why is this negotiation different?

In 2011, the laws permitting step increases after contract expiration and application of step and other across the board increases on a retroactive basis changed. Since 2011, PERA specifically prohibits step increases or across the board increases after the expiration of the contract. PERA made an exception to the prohibition on retroactivity for police and fire fighters only. This exception does not apply to any other public employees, including nurses.