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Statement of Gloria Allred

We are here today to announce that we have filed a lawsuit on behalf of 9 fired healthcare workers against Prime Healthcare and St. Francis Medical Center in Lynwood, California.

Our lawsuit alleges that all 9 of these dedicated healthcare workers were retaliated against and wrongfully terminated in violation of their rights under California law. The plaintiffs in this case are Mayra Castaneda, Lorenza Bernal, Sonia Rodriguez, Dolores Aguilar, Quennie Reyna, Scott Byington, Maricela Garay Barajas, James Blankenship, and Arlene Nielsen. In their lawsuit, which was accepted for filing in Los Angeles County Superior Court yesterday, contains very serious and disturbing allegations against the defendants Prime Healthcare and defendant St. Francis Medical Center. In our legal complaint plaintiffs allege that after the defendant Prime Healthcare acquired St. Francis Medical Center the plaintiffs have opposed and protested and complained to management and through their unions about what they believe to be unlawful employment practices resulting in adverse patient health and safety care issues.

Because our clients were so dedicated to protecting their patients who were in their care at St. Francis Medical Center and because plaintiffs understood how employment practices at the hospital were having a negative impact on patients, they reported their concerns to management.

Plaintiffs allege in their lawsuit Defendant Prime took actions detrimental to the health and safety of its patients and healthcare workers. For example, Plaintiffs are informed and believe that:

- (a) In the name of profit, Defendants laid off many health care workers and thereafter failed to have a sufficient number of healthcare workers in order to maintain safe and healthy patient care.

(b) Defendants accepted patients even though the nurse-to-patient ratio was violative of Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations, thereby providing unsafe patient care. Title 22, section 70217 mandates minimum licensed nurse-to-patient ratios for different care units.

(c) Defendants admitted patients even though there were insufficient numbers of nursing staff and refused to block patient rooms by continuing to admit patients even when there weren't sufficient nurses to ensure the required nurse-to-patient ratio. There were numerous occasions when, for example, the required ratio was 4:1 and there would be 6 patients, no Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), no charge nurse, no breaker or any other type of resource nurse.

(d) Defendants' refusal to hire more health care workers caused Plaintiffs to do the work of 1 ½ to 2 persons and the quality of care did not matter to Defendants.

(e) Defendants also did not hire enough non-nursing staff necessary to maintain safe and healthy patient care.

(f) There have been occasions when "stat labs" have been ordered, but due to insufficient or no phlebotomists or lab techs, it took over 4 hours to obtain lab reports and the standard of patient care and safety was adversely impacted.

(g) As a result of fewer health care workers, some Plaintiffs were required to work double shifts.

(h) As a result of fewer health care workers, some Plaintiffs were required to work 16-20 hours, and work 12 days straight without a day off in between.

(i) There was a staffing shortage of Certified Nurse Assistants, Licensed Vocational Nurses, Registered Nurses, Monitor Technicians, Radiology Techs, Ultrasound Techs and Lab Techs.

Plaintiffs allege in their lawsuit that their reports to management were to no avail.

As a result, plaintiffs obtained letters of support from many elected officials and other supporters of their unions.

Our lawsuit alleges that on November 30, 2023, on their day off, Plaintiffs walked to the corporate office of Prime Healthcare to deliver the letters of support from 9 elected officials urging the defendants to prioritize patient care and worker safety because plaintiffs believe that the employment practices of St. Francis were having an adverse impact on patients and workers.

They were able to enter the corporate offices and deliver their folder of letters containing their concerns and documents that they allege were evidence about employment practices that violated laws designed to protect the health and safety of patients and workers.

On December 15, 2023, defendants suspended all 9 of our brave clients and on December 20, 2023, all of our plaintiffs were terminated. Plaintiffs deny defendants alleged reasons for the termination and allege in their lawsuit that their reasons for terminating them were a pretext.

All of our plaintiffs were the leaders of the negotiating team for these and other issues for their unions. Was the real reason that these leaders were terminated because they refused to stop raising these issues with Prime Healthcare? We believe that they must not fight this fight alone and we will support them in this battle to protect patients at St. Francis and all of the many employees who are dedicated to safe healthcare for them.

We all believe in patients over profits and will not be deterred or intimidated by a big, powerful corporation who has tried to make an example of the courageous union leaders who put patient health and safety first.

Si se puede, si se puede. We look forward to seeing the defendants in court.

Statement of Attorney Gloria Allred
Representing the 9 Plaintiffs in the lawsuit
January 12, 2024