



**For Immediate Release**

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Contact: Bradley Van Waus, (240) 460-0352, Stephen Frum RN, (202)494-8083

## **Judge rules that MedStar Washington Hospital Center broke federal labor law.**

### ***Management refused to provide staffing and patient safety information to nurses.***

WASHINGTON, DC--In a stunning rebuke to MedStar Washington Hospital Center management, an administrative law judge ruled last week that Washington Hospital Center management broke federal labor law when it refused to provide information about hospital staffing patterns and patient safety survey information to registered nurses. The ruling from Administrative Law Judge Arthur Amchan was decided on September 11, 2013.

National Nurses United, the nurses' collective bargaining representative and the nation's largest union and professional association of registered nurses, filed the charges after nurses complained of a noticeable decline in patient safety standards at the region's largest hospital. Nurses sought the information due to hospital management's repeated violations of their staffing guidelines as evidenced by short staffing forms signed by over 1,000 registered nurses. Nurses also requested from hospital managers data from the Agency on Healthcare Research and Quality Survey on Patient Safety Culture, a biannual survey on caregivers' perceptions of patient safety measures at the hospital. Both the staffing information and survey information were to be used for making recommendations to hospital management to improve patient safety and staffing at the hospital.

Rather than work with nurses to improve patient safety at the hospital, management claimed confidentiality and sought a "gag order" to prevent registered nurses from discussing the results of the survey or hospital staffing patterns with the community or hospital licensing authorities.

"Nurses have a critical duty to advocate in the exclusive interest of our patients," said Lori Marlowe, RN, chair of the Professional Practice and Patient Safety Council at Washington Hospital Center. "Nurses will never waive our duty to be patient advocates due to management's embarrassment about their patient safety and staffing record. Judge Amchan's ruling is vindication for the nurses who are standing up for improved patient care."

This ruling comes as the Council of the District of Columbia returns from recess poised to consider the Patient Protection Act of 2013. The Patient Protection Act would require all District hospitals to prioritize patient safety by implementing mandatory, minimum nurse-to-patient ratios on all hospital units at all times according to patient need. Hospitals that violate safe staffing standards would be fined.

“Nurses are demanding that the DC Council pass the Patient Protection Act so that nurses can provide the high quality care that we know our patients need,” added Marlowe.

National Nurses United represents 185,000 RNs across the United States, including 4,000 RNs in the District of Columbia, together with its affiliate, the DC Nurses Association.