

April 25, 2013

Dear Nurse Colleague,

For many years I have worked side-by-side with you and other caregivers at UMass Memorial providing compassionate, high quality care to our patients when they have needed us most. I feel privileged to call the nurses of UMass Memorial my colleagues, my friends and my teammates in patient care. I have profound respect and admiration for our nurses, and I can assure you that we are working to reach a fair contract settlement with the MNA.

At times in my career, I have felt overwhelmed by the magnitude of the challenges we have faced together, be it covering multiple traumas in the Emergency Department or running between ICUs on three different floors as a respiratory therapist. Despite these challenges, we have always worked together to assure that our patients receive the high quality, safe care they deserve. And since there is nothing more important to us than the quality of care we deliver, I wanted you to know that I was deeply hurt by the quotes from the MNA attacking that quality of care.

While this is a time of uncertainty, the one thing that I am certain about is that we provide high quality, safe care to our patients. Would I like more pharmacists, therapists, medical assistants, physicians and nurses by my side? Absolutely, but we all recognize that we do not live in a world of unlimited resources and that the most important ingredients in delivering great patient care are teamwork, compassion for our patients and respect for our fellow caregivers.

As a clinician, I have an obligation to ensure that our patients always get the high quality care they deserve. As CEO of UMass Memorial Health Care, I have that same obligation, with the additional responsibility of ensuring that we will always be here for the patients and communities we serve. I am concerned, given the profound changes in health care finance and massive cuts that are already occurring, that if we don't work together to bring the long-term costs of care down we will not be here for our patients and our fellow caregivers who depend on us.

During our negotiations with the MNA, we have taken a hard look at specific staffing concerns it has raised and have responded with staffing proposals that will cost approximately \$3.5 million annually between both Medical Center campuses. This is a targeted investment in staffing in particular areas, and those areas are outlined in the proposals we have already presented to the bargaining teams. And, it's the right thing to do.

As a physician, I know and understand how hard you work to deliver care to our patients because I have witnessed it firsthand. I know and understand that health care reform is placing a tremendous burden on the Medical Center and other hospitals. And I also know how much we all care about our patients. I hope that the MNA will see that the way forward is to work together.

We have had many difficult changes over the past two years and are asking you to share in some of the same sacrifices that 6,700 of your Medical Center and Medical Group colleagues – union and non-union management and staff -- have already agreed to. These changes are necessary to both meet the tough demands being placed on us by government and private payers to lower costs and to ensure that the Medical Center will be financially stable in the future.

The road ahead will not be without its challenges, but I believe in our nurses, our physicians and our staff. Working together we can overcome any challenge that comes our way. I am new to the role of CEO and truly want to find a different way to do business with the MNA, but it will take two willing participants to change the relationship. I hope the MNA gives all of us a chance to work together in a positive way.

With gratitude and respect for the care that you provide to our patients every day,



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