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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **A statement from United Nurses and Allied Professionals Rhode Island Hospital Local 5098 President Frank Sims, R.N. on operational changes at RI Hospital**

**Providence, RI** - Frank Sims, R.N., President of the United Nurses and Allied Professionals (UNAP) Local 5098, which represents nurses and health professionals at Rhode Island Hospital, issued a statement today in regards to significant operational changes being made at Rhode Island Hospital to accommodate an influx of new patients amidst staffing shortages. Multiple steps have been taken to stretch resources across Lifespan hospitals. Specifically, Rhode Island Hospital is:

- expanding nurse-to-patient ratios
- placing Intensive Care Unit (ICU) patients in non-traditional ICUs and converting Intermediate Care Units into ICUs
- combining the Surgical Intensive Care Unit and the Trauma Intensive Care Unit.
- re-deploying nurses and other health professionals from the Catheterization Lab, Electrophysiology Lab, main Operating Room and Ambulatory Surgical Center to other parts of the hospital.
- limiting the amount of transfers from other hospitals.

Sims stated, “The hospital had no choice but to make these changes. There simply isn’t enough staff to handle the amount of patients coming into the hospital. We want to be abundantly clear about what these changes mean for the health and safety of *all* Rhode Islanders. It means the

health care system in our state has reached a breaking point, forcing our biggest hospital to take drastic measures to try to meet the needs of Rhode Islanders in need of medical care. It means that if you or a loved one has a medical emergency – COVID-related or not – there may or may not be a bed for you depending on how bad this wave becomes. It means longer wait times. It means exhausted nurses and other health care workers caring for you or your loved one.”

Sims continued, “The employees at Rhode Island Hospital are bending over backwards to assist in this transition – but it is wearing thin on these frontline health care workers, who are now two years into this pandemic. Staff are stressed, overworked, burnt out, and are now forced to take on even more patients. At least a dozen nurses will be asked to change from working days to working nights to accommodate these changes. And we have no idea how long this will last.

We are calling on the Governor to immediately deploy the National Guard to assist in any way they can. We are also asking that documentation requirements be changed to crisis level documentation, allowing health care workers to spend more time caring for patients and less time doing paperwork. And lastly, we support any efforts that will help retain health care employees at the hospital, including the use of federal funds for retention bonuses or hiring bonuses, paid annually from management, that will keep health care workers employed at the hospital for years to come.”

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