



ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON BARNABAS **HEALTH CARE HEROES DESERVE BETTER**

The Covid-19 pandemic presented for many of us an unprecedented public health emergency. As the death toll climbed and panic rose in those early chaotic months, members of USW Locals 200 and 9620 at Robert Wood Johnson Barnabas Health stepped up and did what we were trained to do: care for the sick and dying despite personal risk.

We banded together and made sacrifices when the hospital system told us they were low on personal protective equipment (PPE) that was vital to protecting ourselves and our patients.

We showed up early and worked late when short staffing demanded it. We watched refrigerated trucks roll into our parking lots before returning to our intubated patients, praying they wouldn't end up inside one of them.

We, like health care workers across the globe, stepped up time and time again, trusted to care for people in their final, vulnerable, grueling moments, all while putting ourselves at risk.

According to a lawsuit filed by the health system, by March 2021, the RWJ Barnabas health system reached over 1,000 confirmed cases of Covid-19 contractions at its 11 properties amongst patients as well as staff, who had been sacrificing their time and health to manage the worst public health crisis in a century.

Nine of those heroes died.

We've been through a lot this past year and a half, and though vaccine distribution has significantly reduced rates of serious illness and death from Covid-19 infection and brought about a much-needed sense of optimism, reasonable questions about how and when we get ourselves vaccinated are being met with outright refusal by RWJ management.

From pregnant workers nearing their due date to employees with immune deficiencies, people across various demographics have concerns that span the political, gender, race, and religious spectrums.

Termination of a worker from a job they've committed themselves to for years, and throughout a devastating, traumatizing pandemic, is not a reasonable response. Not to mention the mental health toll this crisis has taken on so many of us—more pressure is not what we need.

Many of us are already vaccinated, and as a union, we believe that widespread vaccination is the path forward out of this pandemic. We take our health and our lives just as seriously as we take our patients'. What we need from our employer – what we've earned over the past year and a half on the front lines – is the opportunity to collectively formulate a plan on how to manage the spread of this deadly virus while keeping our dignity and agency in place.

We all want what's best for our community. That has always been, and will always be, our number one priority.

Let us come to the table for an open dialogue on how best to tackle this virus in the workplace together, as we have done with every hurdle in the past. Our union knows that any challenge is more cleanly sorted out when approached collectively and through dialogue rather through dictation.

With everything we have been through together with RWJ Barnabas, we deserve better.

LOCALS 200 AND 9620 UNITED STEELWORKERS **USW**