

Press Release

For Monday, November 25, 2019

Contact: Pedro Zayas, pzayas@seiul199ne.org, 860-830-2478

Cassena Care Nursing Homes Notified of Intent to Strike by SEIU 1199 NE Workers *Caregivers set strike deadline of December 10 for contract violations and unfair labor practices*

Union caregivers from District 1199NE, SEIU, sent their intent to strike notice to Cassena Care Norwalk, Stamford and New Britain with a strike deadline set for December 10, 2019, at 6:00 AM.

Workers are ready to strike against all Cassena Care nursing home facilities in Connecticut for illegally implementing changes to the collective bargaining agreements and other unfair labor practices.

“The bosses at Cassena Care must learn that you can’t just cross Union workers without expecting a fight. We are here today to make sure that Cassena Care complies with our bargaining agreement and to hold them accountable for breaching the law,” said District 1199 President Rob Baril during Monday’s press conference in Norwalk. “White, black and brown caregivers deserve to have dignity in the workplace. These bosses have demonstrated that they are not up to that task.”

Cassena Care is a New York-based nursing home operator with some 13 facilities in Connecticut and New York. In Connecticut, Cassena Care has incurred in multiple violations of federal labor law, including erosion of bargaining unit work, denying workers proper union representation, denying pay as established by contracts, paying workers as low as \$12 per hour in Fairfield county, refusing to pay health insurance and pension contributions, and direct dealing by trying to intimidate and negotiate with workers individually instead of facilitating union negotiations.

The Union and Cassena have engaged in active negotiations since June of 2019. According to Cassena Care’s cost reports filed with the state of Connecticut, owners have paid themselves over \$5 million dollars stemming from nursing home funds.

“I have been a certified nursing assistant for 35 years. The contract that I am fighting for doesn’t only affect my coworkers and me, but also affects our families and livelihood. After working so hard I should be able to retire with dignity and respect. I am prepared to strike because Cassena Care has broken the law. Our residents and staff deserve dignity and that also means Cassena Care should follow the law,” said Lorna Nelson, a Union worker at Cassena Norwalk.

Approximately 240 union members work at Cassena Care Norwalk, Stamford and New Britain, serving some 330 residents. Union members are certified nursing assistants, dietary and housekeeping staff. Additionally, in Cassena Care Norwalk, registered nurses and licensed practical nurses are also in the Union.

“Today, I am asking Cassena Care of Norwalk, Stamford and New Britain to abide by the collective bargaining agreement that they established with 1199 SEIU. This includes the repeal of unilateral changes to the contract they signed and the cessation of all ongoing efforts to disrupt the bargaining process which further violates and degrades the bargaining process. I stand with the care workers of District 1199 SEIU in their fight for worker fairness,” said Norwalk’s State Rep. Chris Perone.

The National Labor Relations Act requires labor unions to give healthcare employers at least 10-days advance notice before going on strike.

District 1199 represents roughly 6,000 nursing home workers and over 30% of nursing homes in Connecticut are in the Union. But the activism of Union caregivers for quality care, respect on the job, livable wages and benefits has a positive impact on 100% of the industry’s workforce.

SEIU 1199 Union members have a long history of success fighting for health care workers’ rights and quality services for people in need. We advocate for living wages for all workers — black, brown and white — and adequate resources to do our jobs well. The Union represents 26,000 health care workers in Connecticut.

###