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News from University of Michigan House Officers Association (HOA)

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Residents at U-M Hospital System Fighting for Fair Wages

Residents still being seen as cheap labor, even amidst pandemic

ANN ARBOR — Over the last few months as COVID-19 rampaged its way through Southeast Michigan, residents at the University of Michigan Hospital System have been thrown onto the frontlines to take care of the sickest patients in the state. During contract negotiations, the physicians have asked for fair wages as their collective bargaining agreement expiration date quickly approaches, but hospital administrators are not budging.

University of Michigan House Officers Association (HOA) – the union that represents the physicians at the University of Michigan’s hospital system residency program – is calling on the hospital administrators to step up to the challenge like their members have and take their contract requests to heart.

“As anyone can tell you, COVID-19 has been one of the toughest things our country and our state has been through, but the residents at U of M have bravely answered the call to win the battle against this pandemic. Hospital administrators need to recognize the extraordinary risks residents have willingly taken on during this extraordinary time and fairly compensate us based on that reality,” **said Robin Tarter, executive director of the U of M House Officers Association.** “All the residents ask is to be paid a fair wage so they can afford housing for themselves and their families, start making payments on their mountains of medical school debt, and be appropriately compensated for working 80 hours a week. It’s clear that the hospital administrators are not interested in being the ‘Leaders and the Best’ because these simple requests keep falling on deaf ears. These hardworking medical professionals are an integral part of the hospital system. Administrators must stop looking at residents as cheap labor and compensate them for the hard work they do here.”

On Monday, May 11 administrators and the union will come to the table and try to come to an agreement before the collective bargaining agreement expires in late June, which will lock in compensation for two to three years.

“While we are grateful for the progress that’s been made on several non-economic issues, we’re not close to working out a fair wage for these physicians,” **Tarter**

added. “The hospital believes they can’t pay them the wages they deserve because of the loss of revenue due to the pandemic, but we simply know that’s not true. That is what the unrestricted endowments funds can and should be used for.”

“When someone is matched into a residency program, they’re training anywhere from three to 10 years learning a specialty and trying to become the best doctor they can be,” **Tarter continued.** “When COVID-19 hit, these residents - with no complaints - had to suspend their specialty-specific training to battle on the frontlines to save lives during this pandemic. Residents were proud to step up to the challenge. It’s time the administration worked with us on a contract that values the work that residents have taken on.”

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