

Mass General Brigham, nurses called to talk at State House amid biggest nursing strike in Mass.

About 4,000 leave job for one day in fight over pay raises, insurance costs



Nurses strike outside Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston on Wednesday. *Christian Kantosky for The Boston Globe*

By Marin Wolf — Boston Globe and Jonathan Saltzman — Boston Globe

July 8, 2026

BOSTON — Governor Maura Healey has summoned the state's largest health system and its striking nurses to the State House on Wednesday in an attempt to broker a new contract, according to the Massachusetts Nurses Association.

The calling of the late-afternoon meeting came hours after a boisterous start to Massachusetts' biggest-ever nurses strike, and the first at Brigham and Women's Hospital. Mayor Michelle Wu also helped arrange the meeting, the union said.

Thousands of Brigham nurses and supporters poured onto Francis Street near the hospital starting at 7 a.m., shaking cowbells, banging on plastic buckets and cheering at a deafening chorus of supportive honks from passing cars. The nurses, sporting "Union Strong" and "Brigham Nurses United" shirts, waved signs calling out management. "Value Nurses Like You Value Your Bonu\$e\$," one sign read.

About 4,000 Brigham nurses walked off the job for one day as they fight with MGB over pay increases and insurance costs. The Brigham, a nationally renowned Harvard teaching hospital, and MGB have unsuccessfully been negotiating a new contract for months. A separate group of 450 clinicians who visit patients at their homes under MGB Home Care also went on strike Wednesday, for seven days.

Despite the short duration of the strike, nurses will be locked out of the hospital until July 13. Brigham, one of MGB's two flagship hospitals, is contractually obligated to provide temporary nurses with five days of work, MGB told staff.

Jackie Coscia, a 29-year-old nurse in the cardiac surgical intensive care unit, said the nurses planned a one-day strike to show their resolve.

"We wanted to make a point but we didn't want to endanger our patients," said Coscia. "We didn't want to leave our patients for that long. Now it's up to [management], and if they're going to lock us out for five days, it's on them."

Coscia and other nurses plan to report to work Thursday morning for their usual shifts, but they expect Brigham will lock them out by removing their badge access. If they do, Coscia said, the nurses will protest the lockout and continue picketing. It's less clear what will happen after the expected lockout ends.

"I was told we go into a cool-down period and then we go right back into negotiations," she said. "It's all kind of up in the air after that."

MGB has said the nurses' demands are not "financially sustainable and not supported by the current labor market."

"Our highest priority is the safety and well-being of our patients," the health system said in a statement. "Brigham and Women's Hospital remains open and fully operational, and patients should continue to come to scheduled appointments unless they hear directly from their care team."

MGB representatives said they have secured nearly 1,300 temporary nurses to keep the hospital running as normal. But the transition to those temporary nurses Wednesday morning was not smooth, striking nurses said.

Kelly Morgan, a Brigham nurse and head of the union chapter, said that hospital management kept union nurses beyond scheduled shifts as the strike began in several units, including the neonatal intensive care unit and the cardiac catheterization lab, because they didn't have enough replacements.

Morgan said MGB leaders refused to negotiate with the union Monday during a meeting at Healey's office because the system was "completely confident that you had enough replacement nurses to adequately care for our patients."

"Clearly they don't if they weren't letting people leave," Morgan said. In a morning statement, MGB said that all agency nurses had been fully integrated into patient care and disputed reports that the temporary staff weren't in place in time for the neonatal intensive care unit's shift change.

Several patients said they were disappointed that MGB didn't tell them sooner about the strike and what to expect.

Destiny Cosby, a 23-year-old military spouse from Boston, has been with her son at the Brigham for 70 days since he was born prematurely. She said hospital leaders didn't speak with her about the strike until Tuesday. "Prior to this, management didn't tell me. I had to learn from the news," Cosby said.

Ben Mays, a 38-year-old man from East Boston who works in public policy, said that his wife chose to deliver their first child at the Brigham because, "it is quite possibly the best facility in the world for delivering a baby."

Mays said he was shocked at how little information he and his family, who are still at the hospital recovering, received in the days leading up to the walkout.

"If I ran an organization, the number one thing I would be thinking about ... is you would do very clear communication in advance," Mays said. "It seems like the leadership here is almost embarrassed to talk to patients and communicate what's going on."

MGB said it had notified patients about the strike through flyers on meal trays, messages on TVs, and signs.

"We understand how stressful this moment is for patients," MGB said, adding that's why it has activated its thorough plans for emergencies "to ensure that patients continue to receive high-quality, safe care."

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) joined the nurses at the picket line on Francis Street and handed out doughnuts.

The sides are particularly far apart on wages. The union wants a 3 percent raise for the first six months and a 4 percent raise for the next 12 months of the contract. The hospital isn't offering any new across-the-board raise.

Management points out nurses already receive a 5 percent raise on the yearly anniversary of their hiring — a so-called step increase — until they

reach two decades of service, which helps make Brigham nurses among the highest paid in the state.

Brigham nurses start at \$86,700 annually, and those with two decades of service earn at least \$220,000, according to documents shared by MGB. Nearly one-third of the union, or 1,322 nurses, earn that maximum amount, MGB said.

For health insurance, management wants nurses who are enrolled in Harvard Pilgrim Health Plan, which is more than half of the membership, to pay 2.5 percentage points more of their monthly premium.

At the picket line, several non-unionized physician assistants stood nearby and cheered the striking nurses.

“Nurses are the foundation of Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and we could not do our job safely or well if they weren’t part of our patients’ care team,” said Elyse Doherty, 35, chief neurology physician assistant, who has been a PA at Brigham for 10 years.

Doherty said it’s “really sad” that management has refused to give the nurses a cost-of-living increase in addition to their 5 percent annual step increase: “To not be given any cost-of-living increase is insulting for all of the work that they do.”

She added that it’s true that some veteran nurses might earn more than new doctors, but that makes sense to her.

“Someone that has been here 30 years, dedicating their entire life to this profession, should be making that much money,” she said of nurses at the top step who make over \$200,000 a year.

Although the union has said the cost of living increase and health insurance contributions are the sticking points, several nurses said money isn’t the big issue.

“We don’t have adequate staffing and we have difficulty on a good day retaining staffing,” said Kathryn Julien, who works in the Center for Women and Newborns. “It’s also respect. We’re not respected. I personally don’t do my job for the paycheck.”

