

Statement from Ben Degnan, Butler Mental Health Worker and Bargaining Committee Member

"Here we are, one week later and with zero responses, zero answers, and a lockout that has now hit its three month mark. Care New England has had our proposal since last Wednesday, when they decided to walk out on us and the negotiating process. Our counteroffer required us to make tough decisions and sacrifices, including a new premium for our health insurance plan, simply because we know our co-workers who earn the least can't survive without a change. But this is about so much more than just us. By choosing to prolong this strike, Care New England is losing untold revenue in reduced services. But we are not talking about the effect that has on shareholders and stock prices, it is our patients that are bearing the brunt of CNE's bad business decisions. Our state has had a mental health crisis for years and we were at capacity even before the strike began. Each day CNE prolongs this strike means a further reduction of services and vulnerable patients in crisis who now must turn to emergency rooms and face longer wait times. CNE would rather reduce their bed capacity and lower their income than come to a solution. They would rather increase patients' wait times to access critical care than come to the table with us. They would rather sit in a courtroom fighting our unemployment benefits instead of bargaining so we can return to our patients. We don't want this issue disrupting the healthcare system in our state, but that's exactly what CNE is doing. Our latest proposal has narrowed the gap on wages to just \$300,000 a year over four years. Every employee at Butler deserves a living wage - \$18 does not even come close. We believe a solution is achievable but that requires Care New England to bargain with us in good faith, instead of punishing us for demanding the changes needed to strengthen our care delivery system. It is time Care New England ends this - we call on them to come back and sign the offer we put before them."

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MEDIA CONTACT

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ABOUT SEIU 1199NE

District 1199 SEIU New England represents 29,000 health care and service workers in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Southeastern Massachusetts. In Rhode Island, 1199 SEIU NE represents almost 5,000 members. 1199 SEIU NE is affiliated with the Service

Employees International Union (SEIU) - a union of over 2 million members across the United States, Puerto Rico and Canada. SEIU has been a national leader in pushing the growing Fight for \$15 and a Union movement.