

My name is Nicole Donley, I worked as a registered nurse for 6.5 years at St Luke's University Health Network in Bethlehem on the trauma step-down unit. I was terminated September 25 for refusing to comply with their vaccine mandate. I was denied a religious exemption and was unable to provide proof of my prior covid infection due to their refusal to test me at the time I was positive. I worked throughout the pandemic with what I consider to be inadequate ppe and put my own health and the health of my family at risk because I took an oath and believed in my duty to help society during these times. While I have many personal thoughts on mandates, vaccines and bodily autonomy- I would like to use this time to share how I think these mandates will hurt our local communities.

As we have been seeing, staffing crises are plaguing many industries, and healthcare is no different. I have never seen healthcare resources as dire as they are currently. Prior to my termination nurses were regularly taking 7-8 patients with little to no additional aides, if we had aides they were often taking care of 17-34 patients. We were already begging for safer staffing ratios before the pandemic when we were in 6:1 assignments. At the same time we are losing quality staff to burnout or other non hospital positions, we are seeing an increase in patient acuity. Patients are sicker than ever(non covid related) and need more care. We have also noticed increased anger from patients and their families. They are frustrated about the lack of care, while the nurses are more frustrated knowing we could be doing better if we had more staff and more resources. Mental and physical health for healthcare workers is getting worse every day, as they don't have time to recover between shifts and are often asked to work overtime. These are the members of our communities who stepped up and kept society going the last two years. These mandates started in healthcare but will continue, as we have seen in other states, impacting all our local community members. We will continue to see people lose their jobs over these mandates, people who care about the community and want to work. People that are educated and experienced in their fields.

Personally I see healthcare heading for a situation we cannot recover from. Nurses are striking all over the country for safer staffing and better pay, there will not be enough qualified

staff left to care for our citizens. To fire any willing and able workers in this economic climate is absurd. People are willing to sacrifice their jobs for the right to make their own health care decisions, the same right we give to all hospital patients, the right to deny any and all medical interventions. We should all be allowed that right as human beings and especially as Americans.