

November 2, 2016

Cook County Budget Hearings

Maybrook Court House

Good evening. My name is Gerald Cotton and I am an Orthopedic Technologist at the John H. Stroger Hospital of Cook County. Cook County Hospital started the very first Orthopedic Technologist Training Program in this country. The old Cook County Hospital was the only hospital in the country to have three people inducted into the National Association of Orthopedic Technologist Honor Society. In 2003, I was inducted into the National Association of Orthopedic Technologist Honor Society at that time the youngest person in the country. Also, I am one of two people in this honor society in this state.

There are a total of 6 Orthopedic Technologists within CCHHS, all of whom have been eliminated in this proposed budget. At Stroger, 4 out of 5 were instructors for the Orthopedic Technologist Training Program which has graduates of this program working all around the United States. There is one Orthopedic Technologist at Provident. With a combined 149 years of experience in complex fracture management, we are told our work will be done by the existing two Nurse practitioners, and one Physician Assistant, who are not trained in casting or splinting and who already see patients as providers.

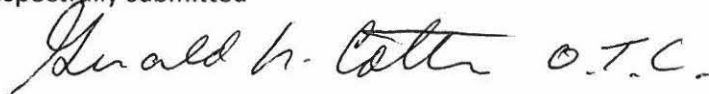
I maintain this is not about patient care; it is about retaliation against me as a whistle blower. In 2011, I reported that Dr. James Kapotis no longer worked within CCHHS, but he was still receiving pay from the CCHHS with the help of Dr. Richard Keen, Director of the Department of Surgery. Dr. Kapotis is now back working at Cermak Hospital with the help of Dr. Keen. In February of 2012, I was sent home on a paid administrative leave on false allegations of threatening behavior in the work place. I was made to take a drug test and sign papers for an Independent Medical Evaluation. Every time I came to the hospital I had to be escorted by CCHHS police while on the premises. I sat at home from 2/12/12 until 12/27/13 almost 2 years. Then I was terminated.

In March of 2014, my union Service Employees International Union (SEIU Local 73) had arbitration in the case. I was found not guilty and made whole. I returned to work in May, but in August I was served with a summons and taken to court by the CCHHS and charged with the same charges that had been settled in arbitration. When I returned to work, the Orthopedic Technologists were removed from the Department of Surgery under the recommendation of the Inspector General and placed in the Department of Nursing. Dr. Jorje Prieto told my co-workers to get out of the union so they could fire Gerald Cotton. Dr. Richard Keen has harassed me since I have returned and I have notified my Union and they are aware. I have been forced to file a law suit against the CCHHS. The States Attorney released to my attorney emails from the Doctor's private emails written about me. There is an email that states "if Gerald isn't flexible, cash them out. Get rid of all six Ortho Tech the \$40,000.00 - \$50,000.00 for the 6 of them that's \$300,000.00. We can hire 3 P.A's to run the cast room." Another email from Dr. Keen states "Get the Ortho Techs out of the O.R., E. R, Trauma and the wards of the hospital. The OR, ER, Trauma, and the wards of the hospital are all in our job description. Now we are only in the clinic. Colleen Harvey, Labor Relations Specialist from CCHHS said there isn't any work for us. Look at the overtime and

the patient load. Colleen Harvey told the Union that Dr. Keen and Dr. Prieto were the persons who recommended removing the Orthopedic Technologists from the budget. DR. Keen put himself a 6 % raise in the proposed budget.

Dr. Keen is the subject of a federal lawsuit for discrimination and shouldn't be making decisions on our jobs. I have 29 years in the County. This is retaliation against my co-workers because of his problem with me. They should not be collateral damage in this retaliation.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerald H. Cotton O.T.C.".

Gerald Cotton

Orthopedic Technologist.