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Chicago, November 20 (RHC)-- In the U.S. Midwest, over 900 employees of the Mayo Clinic hospital system have contracted COVID-19 in just the last two weeks. The infections led to a labor shortage at the

Mayo Clinic campus in Rochester, Minnesota, where ICU beds are filled to capacity and over 1,000 healthcare workers are off the job due to COVID-19 exposure or diagnosis.

Stat News reports hospitals in at least 25 states are critically short of nurses, doctors and other staff.

In a conference call with President-elect Joe Biden Wednesday, Minnesota Nurses Association president Mary Turner described the toll the outbreak is having on frontline healthcare workers. Turner said: "The physical impacts of this virus have been devastating. I, myself, have held the hand of dying patients who are crying out for their family that they can't see. I've taken care of co-workers as they fight for their lives on a ventilator."

As the head of the Minnesota Nurses Association broke down, President-elect Biden also wiped away a tear, promising personal protective equipment and paid sick leave for frontline workers.

In related news, President-elect Biden said the Trump administration's refusal to acknowledge the outcome of the election was preventing his transition team from accessing critical data about the U.S. outbreak and could slow the distribution of vaccines in 2021.

In Washington, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said Wednesday he won't work with President-elect Biden's transition team until the administrator of the General Services Administration, Emily Murphy, determines Biden won the election. Azar said: "When GSA makes a determination, we will ensure complete cooperative, professional transitions and planning."

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