Nurses Send Strong Message: Fair Contract Now

Petition Signed By 85% of Nurses Delivered to CEO And Board

Having worked a month with an expired contract, and not seeing serious movement to reach an agreement, 115 nurses representing every single department and unit signed a petition, that around 30 of us delivered in person to Chief Executive Officer Erik Thorsen on Thursday, June 27.

The CEO declined coming out to accept the petition from the group, but we left it for him, and emailed each member of the Columbia Memorial Hospital (CMH) Board of Trustees with a scanned copy of the petition.

With nearly all nurses signing the petition, it shows that we stand together for our top priorities involving:

♦ competitive wages,
♦ economic stability,
♦ safe staffing,
♦ health insurance,
♦ education,
♦ parity for clinic nurses,
♦ decision making,
♦ and shift length changes.

These issues have not been properly addressed, while the Oregon Health Authority reports that CMH has an 11.8% operating margin from 2018. To view report go to: https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HPA/ANALYTICS/HospitalReporting/2018-FR-3-Financial-Summary-Table.xlsx

We await their response.

Where Do Things Stand?

As another month has passed since our contract expired, nurses are more determined than ever to accomplish major improvements in our workplace. We will not accept compromises that negatively impact patient care or recruitment and retention of high-quality nurses. The people of Astoria deserve high quality care provided by highly skilled nurses who have access to education, training and proper staffing levels. We simply can’t retain or recruit nurses when it’s common knowledge that nurses at CMH suffer economic insecurity, like having pay checks fluctuate, so much that you don’t know if you can pay the mortgage every month. Most departments have
positions they can't fill, putting added strain on current nurses and on patient care. While all this is going on, the hospital continues to hold onto an 11.8 percent operating (profit) margin.

CMH has stated that they intend pay for a new hospital with the money they are saving from running short on funding the operation of the hospital. When we pointed out this isn’t responsible, they stated they would look for other funds. We hope they do.

We have yet to see what funds they have generated through gifts, grants, tax subsidies and bonds to do this. To build a new hospital exclusively off of the backs of nurses and the rest of our staff, and by compromising patient care is unethical.

Our peers at Providence Seaside just reached a tentative agreement for their nurses. In that agreement they received wage increases similar to what management is offering us.

However, Providence Seaside had a negative 13.1 percent operating margin. That’s a 24.9 percentage point difference in operating margins between our two hospitals.

Another hospital they said they were trying to keep pace on wages with is Mid-Columbia Medical Center (MCMC) in The Dalles.

MCMC had their bank come to them in 2017 and informed them they would need to close their doors if they didn’t get in a better financial position.

The CMH administration would like to compensate our nurses similarly as two hospitals that are barely financially viable, while having the fifth largest non-profit operating margin in the state.

It’s time for the Board of Trustees and our hospital administration to rethink their priorities and reallocate to better invest in patients and nurses.

Now more than ever nurses are committed to standing together and winning a strong contract.

We are hopeful for our July 10 bargaining session but preparing to keep the pressure on if needed.

To get more involved be sure to check in with your contract action team member for your unit, or email cooper@oregonrn.org.

Grievances Update

Amid such intense negotiations, we’ve also been inundated by many violations of our existing collective bargaining agreement. While the contract date has expired, the contract should still be followed until a new one is ratified.

However, we’ve had many instances of management unknowingly, or knowingly, violating our contract. When a nurse informs their manager that there might be a contract violation we ask that managers please check with Human Resources before possibly violating our contract. We think many of these grievances could be avoided if this was done.

These grievances have included violations of our call requirements, scheduling changes after schedules are posted, improper dock rotation, unfair and retaliatory discipline, improper job postings, and start/stop time changes that constitute unilateral changes outside of negotiations.

It has been incredibly empowering to see nurses step forward and bring these issues to the table to get resolved through our grievance process.

A union contract is only as strong as it is enforced and CMH nurses are making it loud and clear that we want management to live up to the agreements they make.

We are awaiting resolution on nearly all of these grievances. With so many outstanding issues, it’s hard to see if management is truly taking things seriously.

Many of our nurses say it comes down to a basic level of respect that we need to see from management for our nurses and the hard work that we do. We are hopeful to not only reach an agreement for a new contract but find resolution in our grievances as well.

There are signs that management might be starting to try to do the right thing. This week management agreed to a workgroup to resolve issues in Surgical Services.

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CMH nurses march to Erik Thorsen’s office to personally deliver our petition to show him and the board how important this is to us all.
By marching as a group to deliver this petition, we sent a strong message that we mean what we say with all our signatures on this petition. Nurses do not want their signatures taken lightly, the petition shows how important getting a good contract is to us all. We expect our CEO and our Board of Directors to take very seriously these issues and send their bargaining team with instructions to make major movement to reach an agreement.

Community Petition Launched!

After such overwhelming support among nurses for our internal petition, we heard many other people in our community have been asking what they can do to support us.

As a result we launched a community petition. We are gathering online signatures from our colleagues, fellow staff, providers, family, friends, neighbors, and the larger community in Astoria and around the state and country.

Please help spread the word and ask folks to sign the petition!
CLICK HERE or go to: ActionNetwork.org/Petitions/Support-Astorias-Nurses
What are Your Weingarten Rights?

In the case National Labor Relations Board vs. J. Weingarten, Inc., the Supreme Court ruled an employee who reasonably believes an investigatory interview will result in discipline has the right to have a union representative present. This is legally protected activity under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and is your fundamental right as part of an ONA bargaining unit.

All nurses in ONA bargaining units have the right to ONA representation during any investigatory interview that could lead to discipline. By invoking your Weingarten Rights, you ensure you have an advocate by your side during difficult conversations. Having an ONA steward or labor representative supporting you gives you a contract expert to advise you during any conversations with management that may lead to discipline.

While we hope you never need to exercise these rights, it’s important that we all know our rights in order to protect ourselves and our coworkers.

How to Use Your Weingarten Rights

Take immediate action when you are called into a meeting or discussion you believe may lead to discipline.

- Ask the supervisor or manager who is present, “Could this meeting lead to discipline or affect my personal working conditions?”
- If the answer is “Yes,” stop the meeting immediately.
- Invoke your Weingarten Rights by saying: “If this discussion could in any way lead to my discipline or termination, or affect my personal working conditions, I request an association representative, steward or officer be present. Unless I have this representation I respectfully choose not to participate in this discussion.”

- Contact your ONA steward or ONA labor representative immediately, or call the ONA office at 503-293-0011.
- Wait for the ONA steward or labor representative to arrive or reschedule the meeting. Do not continue the meeting until your ONA steward or representative is present!

Every ONA nurse has the right to fair representation. If you have additional questions about your Weingarten Rights, contact your union steward or your labor representative.

Our Contract Action Team is asking every nurse to pose with a white board sharing a message of what is most important to you. We will use this in upcoming materials to show management how widespread the support is for a strong contract.

Grievances Update (continued from page 2)

It is unclear what the outcome will be of this particular workgroup, but we are confident that our nurses will stand together to make things better.

And we look forward to responses from management on many of our grievances.

2019 ONA Negotiations Team

Chairperson: Kelsey Betts (FBC)
Vice Chairperson: Nicholas Bowling (PACU)
Angela Tucker (SDS)
Theresa Hecox (FBC)
Sarah Rogers (MS)
Shaun Haner (ED)
Shelby Mendoza (MS)

Upcoming Bargaining Sessions

July 10
July 17
July 31