What Will it Take to Win? Visibility.
Multnomah County Nurses from corrections, schools, clinics, and field services came together to discuss priorities and next steps.

Any time union members win a stronger contract it isn’t because they make a more convincing argument across the table, it’s because they applied enough pressure to make their employer uncomfortable holding on to the status quo. That pressure comes from visibility.

Actions that get public attention move employers. As nurses, we have the benefit of working in an industry where public perception is very important. Healthcare organizations devote a lot of resources to looking good in the community, so when nurses start making noise, it scares those organizations. For us, that might even mean a picket in front of the Multnomah Building during rush hour. But that has to be organized by large numbers of nurses, you, and many of your co-workers.

And that’s why more members are ready to take action, because in order to step up our visibility it’s going to require more action from more people.

A supermajority of us signed a petition, but that was just the first step. Among actions the members at the meeting discussed:

- Public Facebook group to show our unity to the community
- Wearing stickers on bargaining day
- Pack the room at bargaining
- Wearing buttons
- Holding signs at work
- Community outreach
- Signs in business and yards
- Phone blitz to stakeholders
- Meet with stakeholders
- Rally
- Picket

What works for union members is a series of escalating activities. Often employers will capitulate before things like rallies, pickets, or strikes are necessary, but the importance of unified action is to show employers we are united and organized enough to do so if we need.

We know Multnomah County isn’t rich, but they have resources—it’s a matter of what they prioritize.

That’s why we start small and work up.
Package Proposal

On Wednesday, Sept. 29, our ONA bargaining team proposed a package containing multiple articles. Packages are to be accepted or rejected as a whole, and proposing them can be an effective strategy for showing what we might be willing to move on, and what are our top priorities, while still keeping all outstanding items on the table.

Here are the items prioritized in the package, based on feedback from members:

- Our first wage increase should be retroactive to July 1, 2018.
- Minimum wage increases of no less than three percent in 2019 and 2020.
- Corrections premium changed to 17 percent.
- Double time for hours worked in inclement weather.
- Current employees should never be placed on a step below where they would be if they were a new hire.
- Making it Multnomah County Health Department’s (MCHD) responsibility to ensure everyone can take a lunch or rest break without impacting patient care—a key way to address staffing.

In response, Multnomah County proposed giving Corrections Health Nurses two one-time bonuses:

- Missed lunch and rest breaks should be compensated.
- Three-hour notice for all mandates.
- Increased vacation accrual.
- For Nurse Practitioners (NP) and Physician Assistants (PA): Cap the number of patient visits per day, unless the NP/PA agrees to add-on an extra patient.
- For NPs and PAs: Have administrative time to address care requests not associated with provider visits.
- For NPs and PAs: Create a cap of patient panels at 110 percent.
- For NPs and PAs: Blocked time for each provider in-basket covered.

Regarding benefits: MCHD has a major interest in adjusting the health benefits to match the rest of the employees at the county. Based on feedback from members, the bargaining team's priority is to ONLY agree to benefits changes IF MCHD agrees to significant changes elsewhere. The package proposal was a signal in that regard. This and all other items at play before the package was proposed are still at play.

A Choice for Corrections Nurses

ONA proposed changing our corrections differential from a flat hourly rate to a percentage and Multnomah County has responded by offering two one-time bonuses.

Currently at Corrections Health, for every nurse hired, two are lost to resignation or transfer, which affects the morale of remaining staff. Vacant posts result in extra shifts and mandated overtime, which further negatively affects morale and increases the attrition rate.

Since recruitment and retention is the theme of our current ONA contract campaign, our bargaining team made Corrections Health a priority.

In order to address this, our bargaining team proposed changing the Corrections Nursing Premium from dollar amounts (currently $1.75 for CHNs, $3.00 for NP/PAs) to a percentage. The current proposal is a 17 percent premium over the hourly rate, based on a national average of corrections nursing differentials.

In response, Multnomah County proposed giving Corrections Health Nurses two one-time bonuses:

- One year after ratifying the new contract, all Corrections Health nurses will receive $2,000, prorated based on FTE, so this would be $1,200 for 0.6 and $1,600 for 0.8 FTE. Nurses must be continuously employed in Corrections Health during that year to be eligible.
- Three years after ratification, all nurses continuously working in Corrections Health will receive $3,000 prorated based on FTE ($1,800 for 0.6 and $2,400 for 0.8 FTE).

Please take the short survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SXH8QFY (but please only those currently working in corrections) to let your ONA bargaining team know what your priority is and what steps you are willing to take in order to fight for a contract that supports Corrections Health nurses.