AURN: Nurses’ Safety A Priority

In our Aug. 12 bargaining session, our ONA/Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU)-Association of University Registered Nurses (AURN) bargaining team presented seven full articles as counter proposals: Overtime and Pay, Vacation Leave Administration, Sick Leave, Leave of Absence, Seniority, Posting and Filling of Positions, and Grievance and Arbitration. OHSU gave our team a few counter proposals as well, including language to improve how we code REQ, curtailment and cancellation, approval of education differential, posting of staff development opportunities, work telephone calls, and the ability to take vacations after transfer to another position.

IS OUR SAFETY A PRIORITY?

A critical part of the day was when OHSU responded to our staffing proposal by rejecting almost all of our proposed language to improve safety. OHSU administration REJECTED our proposals for:

- Zero tolerance for patient illicit drug use
- Empowerment of nurses to refuse to work under conditions of physical or verbal violence, or exposure to inappropriate sexual behavior
- Paid administrative leave for hours missed because of a determination by Occupational Health
- New language for better preparedness for emergencies, pandemics, and disasters
- Regular reviews of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- A new specialized patient care unit focused on harm reduction strategies
- A specialized Harm Reduction Taskforce of ONA-designated nurses and management

Instead of accepting our proposals, OHSU administration proposed to expand training for already existing employees on safety and de-escalation, locked cabinets in acute care adult patient rooms, Code Greens will include violence or precursors to violence, and changes to the safety committee.

OHSU administration also rejected our attempt to improve the joint committee to help staff who may struggle with substance use disorders, and insisted that human resources should be on the committee that is about nursing practice and safety. With this and the rejection of much of the safety
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language above, our ONA/AURN bargaining team got the message that OHSU nurses should be completely deferential to patients with substance use disorders, and yet OHSU has a zero-tolerance position toward nurses.

Among our ONA/AURN bargaining team’s proposals and counterproposals:

- A continued rejection of OHSU’s proposal for verbal warnings to not be grievable
- Reasserted the need for paid bereavement leave, which OHSU previously rejected
- All vacation grievances should be expedited, which OHSU previously rejected
- Out of block requests automatically approved if timeline is not met
- Restructure for changes in start and stop times
- It shouldn’t be a nurse’s responsibility to fill ALL unfilled shifts in the unit before getting approval for a day off when another qualified nurse has agreed to cover their shift
- Position postings should be up for 10 days (currently seven); our team originally asked for 14
- Transfers can happen even if under investigation
- Transfers should be within 90 days (currently six months); our team originally asked for 30

**BLACK LIVES MATTER**

One of the major priorities for our ONA/AURN bargaining team is the Black Lives Matter Memorandum proposed to OHSU in early June. To reinforce that our union is on the right side of history, the American Academy of Nursing and the American Nurses Association issued a statement addressing systemic racism in healthcare.

“Our collective moral vision is for broad awareness and collaborative action in addressing social inequities and health disparities,” said ANA President Ernest J. Grant, PhD, RN, FAAN. “Nurses have a responsibility to use our voices to call for change. The Code of Ethics obligates nurses to be allies and to advocate and speak up against racism, discrimination, and injustice.”

[Click here](https://bit.ly/30RJsky) for the full, powerful statement, or go to: www.SurveyMonkey.com/r/2020AURN-BARGSVY

**HAVE YOU TAKEN THE BRIEF MID-BARGAINING SURVEY YET?**

Much has evolved since our union conducted its initial survey of our members. The outbreak of a global pandemic, its impact on patient and nurse safety, and changes to our overall economy have led our bargaining team to seek further feedback from ONA/AURN members. As a result, we are conducting an additional survey of our major bargaining priorities as we continue contract negotiations.

Our team will be considering counter proposals on Aug. 19, so please [complete the survey](https://www.SurveyMonkey.com/r/2020AURN-BARGSVY) before then.