As we continue to work through the COVID-19 pandemic, it is our goal to hold Providence accountable to ensure PPE provisions, safe staffing, and leave benefits in the event we are exposed or become sick from COVID-19. Wearing the “Protect People Not Profits” buttons shows Providence that we expect them to hold as true to their mission with us as nurses as they expect us to do with our patients.

The 10 Providence ONA bargaining units are still meeting every other week with the Oregon Region Providence executives to bargain over leave provisions, PPE guarantees, notification timeframes for exposures, and other safety measures. We have been holding these meetings for the last six months and are making some progress, especially now that the buttons are out there!

One of the asks is that if a nurse becomes sick with COVID-19, the presumption is that it is from a workplace exposure, given the close proximity we have to patients and visitors, many of whom are untested or their exposure status is unknown. Unfortunately, Providence maintains that it is just as likely a nurse who becomes sick with COVID-19 got it during non-working hours. Since neither can be substantiated, we feel strongly that the presumption should be from the workplace. The other big ask is for leave pay to close the gap between staying home on quarantine and when short term disability insurance (STDI) kicks in (or return to work) so that we can conserve PTO.

Wearing the button tells Providence to put workers’ safety above all and make sure we can stay at home after an exposure, pay our bills, and not burn through all our personal benefits (PTO, EIT). By wearing the button, we are asking Providence to invest in its nurses to keep them safe.

Our proposal is in their court as of September 2. Keep wearing your button to keep the pressure on! If you need another one, please reach out to one of your bargaining unit officers!
Mandatory Low Census Cap Update

You may recall, we left bargaining in June 2019 with the agreement to revisit the problem of excessive low census.

After one year of gathering data in order “to determine future actions or any changes to the management of low census within the Medical Center, which may include development of a mandatory low census cap,” we met with management again on Aug. 31 to revisit the issue and bargain over a low census cap. To bring you up to speed, here is where we left off:

- Our last proposal was a low census cap for all bargaining unit nurses at 12 hours in a 4-week scheduling period, not to exceed 190 low census hours per year, and volunteer low census (VLC) hours did not count toward the cap (this was a give in order to get a decent cap, we wanted to count VLC toward the cap).

- PWF countered with low census cap for only mandatory helping hands nurses at 24 hours in a scheduling period (not specified if 2- or 4-week), not to exceed 250 hours per year, and volunteer low census hours did not count toward the cap.

Since the average low census burden in units that have a high low census burden (BirthPlace, ICU, OR, MedSurg) was near 250 hours a year, this didn’t feel like a fair counter from PWFMC.

Also, the cap only applied to mandatory helping hands nurses — if you wanted the cap, you would have to opt in to helping hands. Hence, we proposed to move our negotiations into an MOU in order to come to an agreement after gathering data.

Management is still stuck on wanting to only consider a cap on mandatory low census; we explained to them that there is no difference between voluntary and mandatory low census for the nurses in terms of the burden. Bottom line, when we don’t have the census to justify keeping all the scheduled nurses, someone is going to stay at home. We agreed in our meeting to review our proposals we left off and come to the next meeting with the low census data and data on how many nurses float our as helping hands as a way to offset low census.

Thank you to everyone who responded to the survey about what you want us to bargain for! If you didn’t get a chance to fill out the survey, reach out to one of your bargaining unit officers and tell them what you think! We will be meeting with management again soon!

Call for Unit Stewards!

ONA stewards are the lifeblood of what make our union strong and are needed now more than ever.

In order for your ONA/PWFMC executive team to better understand and address unit-specific issues, we need unit representatives from each unit to be on the executive team!

We especially need unit representatives in these units:

- Emergency
- SSU
- ICU
- PACU
- Resource
- OR

Learn what it takes to become a union steward!

We will be teaching the basics of:

- Knowing your union rights
- Representing a co-worker
- Filing and processing a grievance
- How to find info important items in your contract
- How to make your union stronger

Here are the upcoming unit representative/steward trainings:

- **Wed., Sept. 16 @ 1 to 5 p.m.**
- **Wed., Oct. 14 @ 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**
- **Thurs., Nov. 19 @ 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**