In bargaining on Thursday, Nov. 19, our employer continued to dig in their heels, refusing to offer pandemic sick leave like other hospitals throughout the state. We offered a counter proposal, in which our negotiators remained firm that nurses deserve pandemic sick leave when they are excluded from work by the employer. See our counter proposal [here](#) or visit your bargaining unit webpage.

We asked the employer’s team, which includes human resource managers and nursing administrators from all four hospitals, to communicate to the upper administration and the board of directors that 100 percent of nurses we talk to support this position. It is astounding. Not a single nurse we heard from said they agree with the employer on this issue.

The employer’s team will have an opportunity once again to accept our proposal on Thursday, Dec. 3, from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m., as we hear their response in our next bargaining session.

Our unity is evident from the proliferation of buttons, stickers, and car signs across all four bargaining units. Please contact your local officers, who have been distributing them.

### Sticker/Button FAQs

**Can I really wear a sticker or button while at work?**

Yes, workers absolutely have a right to wear any political or union buttons/stickers, hats, armbands, scarves, or other clothing or gear on their body. The only restriction is that the item cannot interfere with your work processes. This right is protected by federal law!

**What do I say when a patient or their family asks me about the sticker or button?**

You can answer their question directly and honestly. “We are bargaining with our employer to get pandemic sick leave. They have said no, but we are trying to move them.” Develop a one-minute “elevator speech.”

Since you are there to provide patient care, you should not engage in a long conversation. Indeed, some nurses

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prepare an exit strategy. “I am sorry I cannot answer all of your questions, because I am here to provide you with the care you need.” If the patient persists like “Oh really, how can I help?” You can say, “Please visit our website, www.OregonRN.org and you can talk to our labor rep. They can answer your questions.”

Samaritan United Bargaining Team

- Amina Topp (ED), SAGH Secretary
- Christina Carmichael (ICU), GSRMC Chair
- Lin Johnson (Endo/SDC), SLCH Membership Chair
- Mary Crawford-Seekatz (PACU), SLCH Chair
- Melissa Pfieger (ED), SAGH Treasurer
- Pam Gordon (IV Therapy), PNCC Chair
- Peter Davis (ICU), SPCH Chair
- Shari Suchy (L&D), SPCH Grievance Officer

They are supported by our labor reps, Corvallis-based Tizoc Arenas, who represents GSRMC and SLCH, and Eugene-based Gary Aguiar, who represents SAGH and SPCH.

Your SHS Bargaining Team is Listening

Since our bargaining team proposed and the employer rejected pandemic leave and shared governance, we have listened to nurses throughout the Samaritan system.

We have heard your frustrations with our employer! Many nurses told us a decade ago, working at Samaritan was a pleasant experience. Nurses felt like it was a great place to work; they were supported by their bosses. We felt an affinity too between our local hospital and our respective communities.

However, in the last few years, nurses report a change in the Samaritan organization. It feels like they are working for a business, a huge corporation, instead of for a non-profit healthcare provider.

A quarter century ago, the merger of the Corvallis, Albany and Lebanon hospitals changed the trajectory of the organization. Then, twenty years ago, Samaritan signed management contracts with the two Coastal hospital districts (Sam Pac in Newport and North Lincoln in Lincoln City). This consolidation created the fifth largest hospital system in Oregon (as measured by acute care revenue).

This new enlarged system has incessantly moved to centralization and bureaucratization of the organization. The supposed economies of scale have not brought fruit in economic savings, but has expanded and increased the ranks and costs of upper administration.

The one-size-fits-all corporate model has led to widespread employee dissatisfaction among nurses and others. Lowered employee morale is linked to reduced productivity.

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The employer now disciplines more employees more often and terminates more employees than in the past. Instead of a supportive, nurturing environment, Samaritan hospitals have become more authoritarian with strict discipline. Samaritan’s corporate path has created additional stressors for nurses and other care providers, which increases the likelihood of errors.

This analysis of the organization’s arc suggests it is at a tipping point. If Samaritan continues down this trail it will become increasingly dysfunctional as nurses are more likely to leave the employer.

We are facing a huge nurse shortage in Oregon, especially outside the Portland metro area. One of the chief dissatisfiers is the disregard for adequate benefits that are regularly offered at other hospitals.

Many nurses are place-bound and felt they had no choice, because Samaritan is the only employer of nurses in mid-Valley and the Central Coast. The pandemic has also depressed movement of nurses. However, we expect that after the economy is fully re-opened, nurses will look closely at their options in the Willamette Valley and on the Pacific Coast.

Our leaders are fearful that many of their colleagues will leave the area or retire early. Our hospitals may become a training ground for newly minted nurses, who get their experience in our area and then leave for employers where they are treated better. When someone retires early, it is a huge loss of valuable experiences in the units.

This higher turnover will directly affect patient care. It will mean many nurse vacancies, which will lead to higher patient loads and more precepting. We will end up with fewer experienced and seasoned nurses.

We presented this analysis to the employer and they didn’t buy it. As nurses, we need to bind ourselves together and speak with a single voice. We care about the Samaritan system and want it to succeed. We should articulate our concerns and fears loudly. We need upper administration and the board of directors to hear us.

Staffing Education & Advocacy Training

Have you recently been elected to your hospital’s staffing committee or do you desire to be a more prepared and effective staffing advocate? If so, we encourage you to take a SEAT with ONA for our online Staffing Education & Advocacy Training (SEAT). This is the only comprehensive staffing law training in Oregon and is available online through our OCEAN platform. It is available 24/7 and can be taken at your own pace. It is free for ONA members and available to non-members at a discounted price.

Nurses can earn 2.25 continuing nursing education contact hours for completion of the entire SEAT series.

Visit www.OregonRN.org/OnlineCE to get started.
Nurses Out Front: The Future of Nurse-Driven Health Reform

Nurses have not always been full partners in making decisions about health care reform despite their extensive frontline experience.

♦ What are nurses’ health reform priorities?
♦ How can nurses influence health policy?

If you are looking to make a difference, log on to an upcoming discussion on **Friday, Dec. 11, 2020**, hosted by Oregon Health Forum (OHF) and sponsored by Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). The event will also cover addressing systemic inequities and how they will shape future policy.

Register for this free event today:
www.oregonhealthforum.org/2020/10/01/december-3-2020-nurses-out-front-the-future-of-nurse-driven-health-reform/

ONA Nurse Leadership Institute - Build Your Leadership Skills

Are you interested in taking your career to the next level? Apply today for the Oregon Nurses Association’s Nurse Leadership Institute (NLI). This free, year-long program is designed to help you improve your leadership and communication skills. Join a dynamic group of people who want to make positive change in health care through politics, practice and labor. In 2021, the NLI will focus on equity in nursing and health care during a series of monthly classes, a group project and a mentorship opportunity.

Space is limited, to learn more and complete your application, visit: