Good Samaritan Nurses Deserve Retention Pay

Since the pandemic more and more employers have been offering sign-on bonuses to attract new employees. We often hear the following: “No one wants to work anymore.” In healthcare, we are told by administrators that there’s a nursing shortage - but is that actually true? The pandemic has revealed how administrators value frontline workers. Nurses were deemed Superheroes, but how does one save Lois Lane with a flawed cape?

Looking at the number of licensed nurses in the state of Oregon, in comparison to the number currently employed in acute care settings, it is clear that Oregon does not have a shortage of nurses. What we have is a shortage of nurses willing to work in unsafe and overburdened acute care environments. Historically professions like nursing and teaching have been considered “women’s work,” and there’s a good reason why both of these professions are highly unionized throughout the nation.

Recruitment and retention are indeed important when addressing staffing, but the latter seems to be less important to hospital administrators. Focusing on retention could be the first step in repairing the employer/employee relationship. Why isn’t longevity respected by administrators? Could it be that a newer nurse is less likely to question a manager about a directive that is unsafe? Considering the corporate model that many hospitals have adopted, it could be about dollars, but it doesn’t make sense when considering things like patient outcomes and the reputation of the industry.

Nurse leaders within the Samaritan system are calling on you to participate in an organizing campaign for retention pay. There are no magic words that can be said at the bargaining table to make administrators do the right thing. Bargaining unit leaders cannot do this work alone. Solidarity among frontline workers is the only way to ensure that we keep experienced nurses.
Take Action on Retention

We want to bargain a retention pay side letter with the employer system wide. Our Samaritan ONA Coalition have been working hard on system side letters on COVID and Critical Staffing Incentive. The latter will expire on January 15, 2023, and the employer has firmly told us they are not interested in extending it any further.

Our Samaritan ONA Coalition is composed of two reps from each of our four bargaining units: Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center (Corvallis), Samaritan Pacific Communities Hospital (Newport), Samaritan Albany General Hospital, and Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital. If we are to get retention pay, our ONA leaders need many other nurses to participate by getting involved in solidarity actions (see list on page 3).

Our first action will be a short survey to be released in the new year. The survey will offer concepts on rough proposals and ask nurses what kind of actions to which they will commit.

To move forward, our Coalition needs to see a 50% response rate to this survey. That is, one-half of the 1,010 Samaritan nurses at the four hospitals (or 505 nurses) must complete the survey, before we can move forward.

The employer will push back on retention pay, because no other hospital is offering generous retention pay at this time. [See table below.]

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**Retention pay at Oregon healthcare facilities**

*If you are aware of nurses receiving retention pay at other Oregon facilities, please notify us.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Retention Pay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multnomah County Health Dept.</td>
<td>RNs in bargaining unit upon ratification in November 2022.</td>
<td>One-time payment of 1% of base wage or $2,000, whichever is greater.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Heart</td>
<td>0.9 FTE employees on August 15, 2022.</td>
<td>One-time payment of $1,000.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mercy Medical</td>
<td>Those employed on July 1, 2021, and who worked 1600 hours in the year after that date.</td>
<td>One-time payment $400.</td>
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</table>
Retention Pay Concepts

Our survey will feature two primary questions. First, we will ask nurses to choose among these options for possible proposals:

Option A

**PANDEMIC HOURLY RETENTION PAY**

Similar to Sky Lakes, addition to base wage for a defined period, possibly based on tiers of service.

Option B

**LUMP SUM**

Annual/quarterly payments based on tier of service.

Option C

**RETENTION DIFFERENTIAL**

Percentage across the board wage increase or flat dollar increase to everyone (or whichever is greater).

The other main question will ask to which actions nurses will commit. It is important the employer see our unity. The employer responds to our physical present in mass numbers. (We will ask respondents to check all that apply.)

**SOLIDARITY ACTIONS LIST**

✓ I will **ATTEND A BARGAINING SESSION** on retention pay side letter, even if it is you day off. Or if you are working attend on your break.

✓ I will **SHARE MY PERSONAL STORY** with my name attached in writing

✓ I will carry or circulate a **PETITION**

✓ I will participate in a **“UNITY BREAK.”** That is, I will attend with many other nurses in the main lobby, even if it is my day off and I must drive an hour to attend. If I am working at that time, I will ensure that at least one nurse from my unit can attend on their break at the specified time, if possible.

✓ I **WON’T PICK UP SHIFTS** as part of an ONA-approved job action. We’ll provide strategic and legal advice before we move to this step.
REMINDER OF YOUR RIGHTS AS AN ONA MEMBER

Rights as a Member:

- Discuss your terms and conditions of employment or union matters with your co-workers or your ONA stewards. If you are allowed to discuss anything that isn't directly related to work in any non-patient area, you may discuss your union and workplace conditions. If you can discuss your kids’ baseball game, you can discuss your union!
- Wear union logo, including badge backer (with Weingarten rights), badge pulley, buttons, stickers
- Job protection and anti-retaliation rights:
  - **Weingarten rights**: stewards attend any investigatory meeting,
  - **Just cause**: due process rights to full and fair investigation,
  - **Progressive discipline**: cannot be fired for light and casual reasons, must move through steps, moved up the ladder,
  - **Internal grievance process** supported by stewards and
  - Any formal action against you that is retaliatory is subject to National Labor Relations Act. We can file an unfair labor practice complaint.

What Management Cannot Do:

- Prohibit you from talking about union matters during non-work time, such as before or after work or during break times; or from distributing union literature during non-work time, in non-work areas, such as parking lots or break rooms.
- Question you about your union support or activities in a manner that discourages you from engaging in that activity.
- Fire, demote, transfer you, reduce your hours or change your shift, or otherwise take adverse action against you.
- Promise or grant promotions, pay raises, or other benefits to discourage or encourage union support.
- Spy on or videotape peaceful union activities or pretend to do so.

Any questions? Talk to your ONA executive team, Your department ONA Steward or your ONA Labor Representative.

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