PeaceHealth’s False Narrative

The false narrative of failure to give COVID-19 retention bonuses.

Recently, one of your elected leaders, Jess Detering (Labor & Delivery) confronted PeaceHealth Oregon Chief Executive Officer Todd Salnas about the false narrative he was promoting on retention bonuses.

While doing rounds on the unit, Todd was asked about COVID-related retention bonuses. He began to say that he and Heather Wall, SHMC chief nursing officer (CNO), were trying to find a way to give ONA nurses a raise but that your union leadership had not been responsive to their proposal.

This is simply not true, and Jess, in her role as an elected leader, let Todd know that he was spinning a false narrative. Here is what has actually occurred over the past year on this issue:

- August 2021 – November 2021 – ONA and PeaceHealth (PH) meet at least three times and exchange proposals on an updated COVID MOU.
- November 9, 2021 – CNO Heather Wall, asks Chris Rompala, ONA-SHMC chair, to give her time to work with PH to get a more substantive response to ONA’s COVID demands. She commits to provide a response by week of Nov. 29.
- November 23, 2021 – Heather Wall rescinds prior offer to meet.
- November 30, 2021 – ONA initiates scheduling a meeting and PH commits to meet on December 16.
- December 13, 2021 – PH cancels meeting saying, “we are continuing to review data.”
- January 2022 – March 2022, ONA leaders continue to ask PH for update – repeatedly told “we are still reviewing data.”
- February 14, 2022 – Heather Wall tells the Labor Management Committee that there will be no financial incentives provided through a COVID agreement.
- March 21, 2022 – PH formally requests to open negotiations on current contract early (contract set to expire April 14, 2023). PH claims they want to do this to give nurses more money specifically related to ONA’s COVID MOU demands.
- March 24, 2022 – SHMC ONA Executive Committee formally declines to open negotiations saying that PH does not need to open the entire contract to provide COVID retention bonuses to members.
- April 1, 2022 – ONA Executive Committee meets with PH administration at their request. Discussion centers on PH desire to open contract saying they wish to provide raises to nurses and this is the way they can do this. ONA leadership repeats the reasons they

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do not wish to open contract early and reminds PH that they can provide retention bonuses through the COVID-19 MOU process.

- April 12, 2022 – Chris Rompala and Claire Syrett, ONA labor rep, meet with Heather Wall and Stephanie Sloggett O’Dell to clarify if PH is seeking just to open the wage scale on the current contract to provide raises. ONA shares that they might be willing to do that in order to get the bonuses for members.

- May 5, 2022 – PH formally declines to do a limited wage reopener and pushes again for opening the full contract early. ONA declines and refers PH back to the COVID MOU negotiations process.

Throughout this entire process, your union leaders have pushed PeaceHealth to step up and provide much needed retention bonuses to nurses. Administration does not need to open the full contract to do this.

They don’t even need the COVID MOU. They can do this at any time of their own choosing.

We have shown them survey data from you that tells them how burnt out, demoralized, and fed up you all are; how unappreciated and taken for granted you feel. And yet they choose to do nothing.

Now they are attempting to blame your union leadership for their failure to act. This false narrative is insulting to you and your elected leadership. Jess and the rest of your executive committee continue to advocate for you and fight for what is right. They will be honest about their achievements and their failures. Too bad we can’t expect the same from PeaceHealth administration.

Join the next Day of Action to show we stand together. On Monday, June 13 display your car window shades, wear your black ONA scrubs and put on that ONA button!

PeaceHealth Management Inspires Urgent Care Providers to Form Union

Fifteen health care providers, including physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants, from the three PeaceHealth urgent care centers and one walk-in clinic in Springfield and Eugene filed with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for union recognition.

The new group, PeaceHealth Providers United (PHPU), will focus their collective bargaining power on addressing burnout, understaffing, safe patient care and ensuring access to care for the region’s most vulnerable patients. PHPU will partner with the Pacific Northwest Hospital Medicine Association (PNWHMA), an existing hospitalists union, which is represented by the American Federation of Teachers (Local 6552) and serviced by the Oregon Nurses Association.

“There is a staggering need for urgent care in the community, and we could provide many more patients with quality care, but we can’t retain staff,” said Morgan Garvin, MD. “PeaceHealth management should be focusing on improving staffing, but instead they choose to micromanage the few providers we have left. Unionizing helps balance the scales between us and management so we can make this a place that patients recommend first to their loved ones, and a magnet workplace for providers.”

The PeaceHealth Urgent Care in Valley River clinic in Eugene, one of the four facilities that will have ONA-represented providers, has been closed since last year due to chronic understaffing and staff burnout. The impact of the clinic closure was a significant increase in demand for care from the other facilities and a dramatic increase in stress on the providers at those remaining facilities. Patients who rely on these clinics are some of the most vulnerable in the community, including people experiencing houselessness and housing insecurity, undocumented residents, and people who are uninsured or underinsured.

On Wednesday, June 1, 2022, the providers delivered a letter to management petitioning for voluntary recognition so that they could promptly begin collective bargaining over their concerns about patient care, staffing, and other issues. After being declined for voluntary recognition by PeaceHealth administration, the providers filed for a

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union recognition election through traditional NLRB mechanisms on June 2, 2022.

Dr. Mollie Skov-Ortega, President of the PNWHMA at Sacred Heart Medical Center, said, “I am thrilled to hear about the PeaceHealth Urgent Care group unionizing.

When we voted to unionize almost 8 years ago, it gave us the strength and the voice to be able to stand up for what matters most - patient care and patient safety. We stand behind PeaceHealth Providers United so they can have the opportunity to do the same.”

Wendy Lang, a Nurse Practitioner and one of the providers who will be represented by ONA, notes that PeaceHealth management decisions have led to unsafe staffing levels, 4-hour or more wait times for patients, and unhealthy working conditions. “In just a few months, with just a few decisions, PeaceHealth management has broken urgent care,” Lang said. “Providers are being pushed beyond their physical and mental abilities to practice medicine safely.

There is no safety valve to slow down or stop patient flow, we are not treated as human beings but rather expected to perform like a machine with only one short break in a 12 to 13-hour shift. It doesn’t feel safe and is not sustainable. The union will give me a voice to advocate for my patients and my practice.”

With this action, these clinics will be the first in the county, possibly in the state to be unionized. Be sure to check out this new union’s Facebook page and get them some “likes”: https://www.facebook.com/PeaceHealthProvidersUnited.

Workplace Violence Prevention Committee Vacancies

We currently have openings for ONA members to serve on the PeaceHealth Workplace Violence Prevention Committee (WVPC). These positions are appointed by the ONA executive committee. ONA members in good standing can apply to serve. The WVPC meets from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (virtually) on the last Friday of the month.

While this committee is based out of Riverbend, it includes PeaceHealth system level staff and is influential across all three states in which PeaceHealth operates. Nurse voices on this committee have made a real difference in getting initiatives in place that improve communication about patients with known violent behaviors, better coordination of security staff with front line staff, and additional resources for training to units.

If you have a passion about safety in the workplace, we encourage you to consider applying. If you wish to apply or have questions please email Claire Syrett, ONA labor representative at Syrett@OregonRN.org.

Support SEIU 49

Show your support for SHMC Service Employee International Union (SEIU) 49 members as they go into negotiations by wearing purple on Fridays while they are in bargaining.

ONA stands in solidarity with our fellow Sacred Heart workers in their effort to get a fair contract.
New Protections for Nurse Staffing Law

Last year, ONA members brought evidence showing hospitals exploited the state of emergency to deviate from staffing plans, sometimes when they had no COVID-19 patients! The state legislature listened and passed House Bill 3016 (HB 3016), placing greater restrictions on hospitals.

On Jan. 1, 2022 these new restrictions went into effect, making it incredibly difficult to deviate from staffing plans that have been approved by the hospital nurse staffing committee.

ONA members should empower themselves by taking time to read the new language here.

You can learn more about this and other staffing rules and best practices on the ONA website at www.OregonRN.org/113.

As Oregon faces another surge it is important for ONA members to hold hospital executives accountable to the law!

Some key highlights of the changes:

- Clear limits on how long a Hospital can deviate from plans.
- To deviate from staffing plans there needs to be “a national emergency or state emergency requiring implementation of a facility disaster plan and crisis standards of care.”
- The incident command shall report a written assessment to both co-chairs of the staffing committee within 30 days of deviating from a plan.
- Deviation may not occur for more than 90 cumulative days unless approved by the staffing committee.

Protect Your License, Protect Yourself!

Should nurses carry their own personal liability insurance policy? YES! You insure your home, your car and your health. Why not your career?

A common assumption is that your employer will cover you in any incident that may occur while at work. Technically an employer is responsible for the acts of its staff, but its interest is not necessarily consistent with protecting you. Your best protection is to have your own personal legal representation. Nurses are at more legal risk now than ever before.

Additionally, your employer’s policy will not protect you in an Oregon State Board of Nursing (OSBN) investigation. In fact, it could be your employer who makes the complaint to the OSBN about an alleged violation of scope or law. The OSBN must investigate each complaint it receives and, even if the complaint is dismissed, there are costs to you.

ONA advises all nurses, no matter where you work, to obtain your own liability insurance. ONA endorses the Nurses Service Organization (NSO) because the coverage provided offers the best protection for you. Visit www.OregonRN.org/NSO for more information. Don’t wait, protect yourself today!