

Negotiations

UPDATE

Hospitals' Progressive Staffing Proposal Addresses Shortages, Provides Protections, Demonstrates Commitment

Catholic Health hospitals gave CWA a 13-page staffing proposal that presents a strong, long-term solution to address staffing challenges, the same challenges facing healthcare systems across New York and the country.

Staffing Proposal Details

The staffing model Catholic Health proposed is the most progressive approach to address staffing shortages of any hospital in our region. Not only does it comply fully with the New York State Safe Staffing law set to go into effect in January, but it goes far beyond.

Our proposal:

- Increases staffing to achieve agreed-upon ratios;
- Commits to staffing 10% above core departmental staffing, which means adding more than 250 new positions;
- Provides an additional incentive for associates to pick up shifts if staffing goals aren't met in a quarter; and
- Commits to implement the American Association of Critical Care Nurses' model of a Healthy Work Environment and hire a subject-matter expert to assist with implementation.

Skilled staff members are at the core of carrying out our mission and have helped our hospitals repeatedly meet and exceed national standards for quality and safety, year after year. Our staffing proposal moves us forward as an organization, not only for nurses, but for other important roles like dietary, technicians and environmental service associates.

National Staffing Crisis Puts Focus on Retention and Recruitment

The national staffing shortage is most acute in nursing, but is also being felt in other clinical and nonclinical positions. Throughout the COVID pandemic, healthcare workers have been leaving the profession due to long, difficult hours; burnout; fears of contracting the virus; or refusal to get vaccinated. Millions of Americans are quitting their jobs in what has been dubbed the Great Resignation of 2021. For instance, in August 2021, 534,000 U.S. healthcare and social assistance workers quit their jobs according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Catholic Health values our associates and we thank you for all you do each and every day. Over the last 18 months, we believe no health system in New York State has done more to protect the health and safety of its workforce. We scoured the nation, and beyond, to make sure we had ample PPE for associates, paid hazard pay longer than any other local health system, and launched a robust resiliency program to support our team.

We have also taken significant steps to recruit needed staff in an extremely difficult labor market, hiring nearly 1,200 new associates across Catholic Health, including 230 registered nurses, since the beginning of the year. To address staffing, our hospitals are working more closely than ever before with recruiters at all levels – locally, across our state, and around the country. We are leading facility tours for prospective associates, organizing job fairs and employment events, conducting interviews in person and online, and meeting with colleges and universities across the region to support our recruitment efforts. This national labor issue is affecting our region particularly hard, and our hospitals are tackling it with all the resources available to us.

Impacts of CWA's Strike

CWA's strike, now in its fourth week, has created significant financial hardships for Mercy Hospital associates. It also will contribute to staffing challenges. Since the strike began, nearly 50 nurses have resigned from the hospital, including more than one dozen ICU nurses. This loss of staff, particularly in difficult-to-recruit positions, will only exacerbate the staffing challenges the parties have been trying to resolve in negotiations.

The strike has also caused delays for patients needing care not only locally, but across our region. The Emergency Departments at other Catholic Health hospitals, Kaleida Health, and at ECMC have been overflowing because of the strike, prompting the Erie County Department of Health to issue guidance to residents on alternatives for non-emergent medical treatment. Now, hospitals down into Pennsylvania are feeling the impact of CWA's strike on access to patient care.

It's time to settle negotiations and to end the strike so Mercy Hospital associates can return to work and resume earning income for their families, and provide the high quality, compassionate care our hospital is known for and the Buffalo community continues to count on.

Associates' Rights

Remember, CWA works for you. We've addressed the issues CWA has reported are priorities for our associates. Associates have the right to ask their union representatives to settle negotiations and to end the strike.

CWA Local 1133 can be reached at (716) 828-1133.

CWA Local 1168 can be reached at (716) 639-1168.

Because it's important to have the facts regarding bargaining, we will share regular *Negotiations Updates* with you. You may visit www.chsbuffalo.org/negotiations at any time for the latest news and information related to bargaining and to review copies of these updates and other FAQs.