

# Negotiations **FAQs**

## Answers to some frequently asked questions about contract negotiations

### Is CWA negotiating with each hospital or Catholic Health?

For many years, Kenmore Mercy Hospital; Mercy Hospital of Buffalo; and Sisters of Charity Hospital, St. Joseph Campus, had their own collective bargaining agreements and bargained their contracts separately. In 2016, we agreed to bargain the contracts together through side table and common table negotiations, while still maintaining separate contracts.

### When do the existing labor contracts expire?

All six contracts are set to expire on June 30, 2021, however under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the hospitals and the union, the contract will be extended beyond that date if necessary.

### If I only pay CWA dues so I can work at my hospital, do these negotiations really affect me?

Yes, if you are a member of a CWA bargaining unit, these negotiations affect many aspects of your employment. You and your manager will have to comply with the rules, terms and conditions, and wages and benefits outlined in the contract.

### What should associates do if a union representative approaches them to talk about union business during work time?

You may remind union representatives that patient care is our top priority. Talking about union business in work areas, during work time, not only distracts from patient care, but violates our labor contracts and work policies. If associates want to discuss union matters, they may do so during breaks or other non-work time, in non-patient care/work areas.

### CWA has asked associates to report, to the union, staffing levels as well as patient safety and infection control concerns on our units. Is that appropriate?

We have internal channels that nurses and other associates should use to report their concerns. This includes talking with your manager or other senior leaders, or calling the anonymous Corporate Compliance line, 1-888-200-5380. By reporting these concerns immediately and directly, you will be able to help us quickly assess the situation and respond as appropriate.

### Will Catholic Health reinstate hazard pay since COVID numbers appear to be on the rise again?

We appreciate everyone's hard work and commitment to our patients and community throughout the pandemic. We are proud we were able to provide our associates with hazard pay longer than any other healthcare provider in WNY. As access to vaccines has improved and a larger percentage of the population has been vaccinated, we made the decision to discontinue hazard pay. We remain committed to ensuring our associates have access to all needed PPE to keep themselves and their patients safe. The number of COVID patients in our hospitals appears to be declining. If the situation dramatically changes, we may revisit our decision and negotiate as appropriate with our labor unions.

### What are the hospitals doing to ensure we have appropriate staffing?

Catholic Health and its hospitals are committed to delivering safe, high quality and compassionate care. While maintaining adequate staffing is an important part of that commitment, we recognize that it can be a challenge during these difficult times. Our staffing models are guided by data collected in our workplaces and account for fluctuations in patient volume, case acuity and other variables. The global pandemic has added to the challenges created by position vacancies. Unexpected call-offs and leaves of absence, whether related to the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), NYS Paid Family Leave (NYPFL) or NYS Paid Sick Leave (NYSPSL), also create staffing challenges, which we continue to address.

As discussed recently with CWA leadership, we are taking several steps to ensure proper staffing in our hospitals, including:

- Providing a \$10 per hour bonus for registered nurses and \$5 per hour bonus for clinical ancillary staff to pick up additional shifts;
- Assigning an additional recruiter to the hiring team at Mercy Hospital; and
- Offering priority opportunities to St. Joseph Campus staff who were recently displaced by changes occurring at that hospital.

### Some associates say Catholic Health isn't focused on patient safety. What should I do if I know that's not true?

We think it's unfortunate that any associate would question our commitment to quality and patient safety. We work hard as a team to deliver safe, high quality care to our patients and the communities we serve. Associates can remind co-workers, patients and visitors that our teams have helped our organization earn prestigious accreditations and awards for the quality of care we provide and that we remain committed to patient safety. In fact, it was just announced yesterday that Catholic Health has once again earned the Buffalo/Niagara region's highest cumulative score, highest individual grades, and only "A" grades in The Leapfrog Group's spring 2021 Hospital Safety Grade Report – a leading indicator of quality and safety. Kenmore Mercy and Mount St. Mary's earned two of just sixteen "A" Safety Grades that were given in all of New York State. Sisters of Charity Hospital's Main St. and St. Joseph Campuses, along with Mercy Hospital of Buffalo received three of the four "B" grades that were given in Western New York.

**Because it's important to have the facts regarding the progress of negotiations, we will share regular Frequently Asked Questions with you. You may visit [www.chsbuffalo.org/negotiations](http://www.chsbuffalo.org/negotiations) at any time for the latest news and information related to bargaining and to review copies of these FAQs and other Negotiation Updates.**