

# Negotiations UPDATE

## **Hospitals Focus on Negotiations Despite CWA Strike Threat; *Bargaining Committees More Than \$100 Million Apart***

CWA presented Mercy Hospital on September 20 with a notice of its intent to take approximately 2,000 registered nurses and other associates on strike beginning 6 a.m. on October 1. The last time the union threatened to strike was in 2016, but at that time, the hospital and union ultimately reached new contracts without a work stoppage.

Catholic Health hospitals remain cautiously optimistic they will settle 2021 negotiations without a strike. More than two dozen state, county and local politicians sent a letter dated September 1 to Catholic Health President & CEO Mark Sullivan referring to a possible strike as a “a disaster for the hospital, the workers, and the entire community” given the ongoing pandemic. One week later the union conducted its strike vote. We had planning calls today with the New York State Department of Health as part of our strike preparedness planning.

The hospitals and union must remain focused at the table this week and work collaboratively to find more common or middle ground. Based on costing by the hospitals, the bargaining committees are \$113 million apart. The hospitals are proposing to invest an additional \$13,675,600 in the contracts over three years. The total cost of the union’s proposals over three years is \$126,911,600 – a wildly unrealistic figure given today’s economic climate.

Despite the possibility of a strike in nine (9) days, CWA leaders are showing no sense of urgency to reach a deal. Negotiations are continuing daily and the union has the ability to withdraw its 10-day notice before its planned October 1 strike begins.

### **Staffing is a nationwide concern**

Staffing has been a primary topic at negotiations in recent days. The union’s public statements and at bargaining places blame on Catholic Health leaders for staffing and supply chain issues. However, as has been reported widely by the media, the pandemic and a nationwide labor shortage have created supply chain and staffing challenges that are stressing all hospitals across the country. Despite these challenges, Catholic Health has hired nearly 1,200 new associates, including 230 registered nurses, since the beginning of the year.

Catholic Health’s Director of Talent Acquisition and Retention attended bargaining today to talk about the numerous efforts being made to recruit more staff to the hospitals. Our hospitals are working more aggressively than ever before with recruiters at all levels—locally, across our state and around the country. We have launched a recruitment advertising campaign on TV and social media and have attended more than 50 job fairs in the past year. Our talent acquisition associates also are leading facility tours for prospective

associates and conducting interviews in person and online. Nursing directors from Mercy Hospital also have come to negotiations to meet with the union’s bargaining committee and listen to their concerns and ideas.

The arguments presented by CWA in our bargaining are not unique to Catholic Health hospitals. CWA is preparing for upcoming negotiations with another Western New York health system where it represents nurses and other healthcare workers. In advance of those negotiations, the union is actively soliciting concerns about various challenges, including “months-long” and “widespread” shortages of supplies like linens. New York State, meanwhile, has asked HANYS and GNYHA, the state’s two primary healthcare associations, to help coordinate a joint response to address the “intense workforce shortage that hospitals, health systems and continuing care providers across the state face.”

**We are offering a fair contract.**

In continued demonstration of our commitment to negotiate in good faith with CWA Locals 1133 and 1168, the hospitals’ bargaining teams have updated our proposals to benefit associates. The table below outlines what we are proposing.

Topic	Currently on the Table from Catholic Health	What To Know About Our Latest Proposal
<b>WAGES</b>	2% increase in the first year of the contracts, and 1.5% each subsequent year.	The hospitals commit to 1% more for the first year and 0.5% in each subsequent year of contract than what we previously proposed.
<b>HEALTH PLAN BENEFITS</b>	The hospitals would pay 75% of the premium cost for full-time associates and 55% for part-time associates.	The hospitals would <b>absorb 5% more</b> (70% → 75%) of the premium cost for full-time associates than its original offer.
<b>RETIREMENT BENEFITS</b>	Associates’ pension plan will remain unchanged.	We will continue to maintain two retirement plans for associates, a Defined Contribution Plan (403-b) and the Defined Benefit Plan (pension).
<b>STAFFING</b>	The union owes us a counter proposal for our staffing proposal.	
<b>PANDEMIC</b>	Our latest proposal outlines key initiatives that could be undertaken by the hospitals and CWA to collaborate on communication, supporting caregivers and strategic responses, which would be managed through a Pandemic Readiness Steering Committee.	

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](http://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.