

Negotiations UPDATE

Negotiations Continue During Last Weekend Before CWA Local 1133 Strike

The hospitals' and union's bargaining committees are bargaining through the weekend because:

1. Time is running out before CWA Local 1133 plans to take more than 2,000 Mercy Hospital associates on strike, a move more than 24 state and local politicians have characterized as "a disaster for the hospital, the workers, and the entire community" given the ongoing pandemic; and
2. The parties remain more than \$100 million apart on economic proposals, including \$59 million apart in wages alone.

The hospitals are committed to bargaining in good faith with the union to find common ground to reach a fair contract with market-competitive wages and benefits. We want to settle negotiations and provide greater certainty for our associates, patients and families, and our broader community.

Supplies

Some associates have expressed concerns about the availability of supplies, including linens, tubes, syringes and urinals. Catholic Health and its hospitals have escalated their efforts to secure and distribute necessary supplies to each site. Staff from Supply Chain Management round at least once daily on supply rooms. If par levels are low or nonexistent, staff can be reached 24/7/365 by phone. Catholic Health's Supply Chain Management team has a daily morning meeting to discuss various matters, including backordered items. The COVID pandemic has created supply chain issues and shortages for many medical items, just as it did in 2020 for personal items like toilet paper, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer.

Strike Preparedness

Today, Mercy Hospital wired several million dollars, one of several payment installments, to the agency that will help ensure the hospital is able to continue caring for patients should CWA Local 1133 follow through on its threat to strike one week from now. We would have preferred to invest that money in our people, equipment and facilities. Regrettably, the union has created the possibility of a strike and a situation where the hospital must spend considerable resources to be prepared to continue providing safe, high-quality and compassionate care to patients if the union proceeds with its strike. The union has the right to withdraw its 10-day notice to avert the work stoppage.

Possible Union Strike Cost for Associates

Mercy Hospital will not pay associates during CWA Local 1133's strike. According to the union, its Member Relief Fund is "extremely healthy and has over \$400 million in it."¹ However, CWA will not provide strike pay

¹ <https://www.safestaffingbuffalo.org/strike-frequently-asked-questions>

for the first two weeks of the union’s strike. CWA says its strike will be “indefinite,” meaning that it has not set or announced when its strike would end.

We encourage each CWA-represented Mercy Hospital associate to consider their personal financial situation and how the union’s strike may affect them and their families. Below is a table that illustrates the possible lost income for certain positions during weeks 1 and 2 of the strike.

Mercy Hospital Position	Average Hourly Rate	Gross Weekly Pay	Associate Pay from Hospital During CWA Strike	CWA Strike Pay (Weeks 1-2)	Possible Lost Income for Associate During CWA Strike (Weeks 1-2)	
					1 Week	2 Weeks
RN 1	\$39.70	\$1,488.75	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,488.75	\$2,977.50
RN 2	\$47.87	\$1,795.13	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,795.13	\$3,590.26
EVS Associate	\$14.97	\$561.38	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$561.38	\$1,122.76
Radiology Tech	\$29.90	\$1,121.25	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,121.25	\$2,242.50
Secretary (Grade 7)	\$21.07	\$790.13	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$790.13	\$1,580.26

It remains unclear how many Mercy Hospital associates participated in the strike authorization vote and whether a majority of the 2,000 associates CWA will lead on strike truly are in favor of the union’s work stoppage. Since only about 18% (402 individuals) of Mercy Hospital associates participated in CWA’s *Staffing & Working Conditions Survey*, the number of Mercy Hospital associates who participated in the strike vote and who may be in favor of it may also be low.

Mercy Hospital Associates’ Rights

Associates have the legal right to tell CWA how they feel if they don’t want to go on strike and prefer that CWA settles negotiations with Catholic Health hospitals without a strike. Associates can share their views with CWA Local 1133 leadership at (716) 828-1133.

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.