



HPAE

LOCAL 5105 Newsletter

A Newsletter for the
members of HPAE Local 5105
at Virtua Memorial

THE PATIENT ADVOCATE

June 2022

President's Update

Wage reopener 2022 and Negotiations 2023

Our 2022 Wage reopener proved to be successful because we were able to secure a significantly larger percentage of wage increase than was offered back in Negotiations 2020. We also were able to get a small market rate adjustment and additional steps on the wage scale. This is a vast improvement to what we were offered previously. While no amount of money could possibly heal the moral injury from the last 3 years these wage increases are something we can build on going into Negotiations 2023.

Although the market rate adjustment was calculated the first full pay period immediately following the wage reopener ratification, all members will see the new 2022 wage percentage increase and step increase starting the pay period of June 12th, 2022. Many are wondering "why not June 1st?". This is because the contract language states the raise increase would be effective starting the first full pay period after May 31st, 2022 (End of contract year). Wage increase spreadsheet is available in download form on our Local 5105 webpage under "In this Local". Any question or concerns please reach out to your unit rep or any of the Executive Board members.

Thank you to all members who came out to leaflet, wore stickers, attended a meeting and generally supported our fight for better wages. However, we realize we have a lot of work to do going into full contract negotiations starting in January of 2023. **Our present Union Contract expires May 31st, 2023! Less than one year away!** As we start planning for Negotiations 2023, we NEED to increase member participation to get our voices heard and have ALL members turn out to support the 2023 Negotiations campaign! We need ALL members to get involved to win improvements for nurses. This is the only way to MAKE Virtua listen to its nurses! We hope that the chronic short staffing, no support staff, corporate greed, unsafe working conditions, and increased violence against nurses sparks an interest to actively participate in our campaign to win the working conditions and wages we deserve in 2023. As we celebrate 25 years as a strong and mobilized local union history is evidence that our employer is not just going to hand it to us!!

Our Local Executive Board has been very busy working on the strategic plan for Negotiations 2023 since January 2022. We are putting together a campaign calendar which clearly spells out our plan to gain the best contract for all our members. Shortly we will be sending out contract surveys to poll the membership on what they think needs to be the focus of these upcoming negotiations. The surveys will be used in part to develop proposals and steer the negotiation team in the direction of the wishes of the membership. The elected officers will be excepting any wishes for units to meet with the board and speak to their specific contract concerns!! Please contact me 609-354-8065 if your unit would like to meet with the officers and we will set

up a date prior to January 2022!! We especially want to hear from our newer members and are working on a short survey targeting members with 0-5 years seniority. As the RN workforce is reshuffling members with 0-5 years seniority make up over half of our members!! To be successful we will need ALL HANDS ON DECK! If you are OK with the way things are then it is OK just to stay on the sidelines!

Sign on Bonuses

With record high RN job vacancies throughout the hospital and a shrinking number of nurses willing to work short staffed and under supported at the bedside, hospitals are desperate to attract and lure in new nurses! Our employer proposed a 15,000\$ sign on bonus for a 2-year commitment for specialty areas such as Cath Lab, OR and ER back in September 2021 and the union pushed back by saying that the employer cannot offer new members more money than the members presently working under our contract. In October of 2021 the employer withdrew that proposal and the union proposed going to the table early for our wage reopener to try to address recruitment and retention of RN's at Virtua. Since then we have had our wage reopener bargaining sessions and retention and recruitment was a huge part of the conversation had at the table.

In May, before our members even saw their raise in their paychecks the union discovered many RN jobs posted with a 7500\$ sign on bonus for MED/SURG, PCU night shifts and ER midshift and night shift. The employer said "oh- sorry we did not think they were posted yet, but we wanted to get them posted ASAP in an attempt to hire for hard to fill vacancies." After investigating the situation, the employer stated that they had already given the union notification of possible sign on bonus back in October of 2021 and has tried to circumvent our contract by offering a 7500\$ sign on bonus which would be paid out during the first 90 days of employment. The employer's position was that during the first 90 days these RN's are probationary and not our members. Virtua believes they can offer them money above and beyond what our members are getting. This is completely untrue. All RN's working at Virtua Memorial are members of the union upon hire.

Why are they not concerned with retention? Why are they willing to offer sign on bonuses with no reassurance that after 90 days once these new members see what the real deal is at the bedside they will leave!! We already had 1 bargaining session on June 7th and the union believes the employer needed to offer these positions to internal bargaining union member with the same incentive before offering them to outside applicants. We are sending out via email and HUSTLE text a brief survey to see if any of our members would be interested in any of these hard to fill positions. Please make sure you fill out the survey!! More to come on this issue!

Updates on Staffing Committee and Pandemic Preparedness Committee

Staffing Committee -

Anyone is welcome to attend this meeting where we discuss issues on individual units that impact staffing. Please contact me at 856 296 6439 if you are interested in attending so that I may add your name and topics to the agenda in advance. We meet with administration and management (as necessary) on the second Thursday of the month at 3pm. Meetings have been virtual. Dawn Jones (L & D) co-chairs this committee.

Recent discussions have been: agency help; observer roles; easing PCT job requirements in order to hire more PCTs; secretary coverage; balancing nights and days staff complements; and physician availability to help with throughput. We also have discussed the importance of the staffing office role to know who is qualified to be sent to certain areas.

We cannot fix issues without your input. If you have a concern, it is in your best interest to attend to improve the effectiveness of what we do and so that you can see how YOU can make a difference! The meeting is only one hour and definitely worth your time!

Pandemic Preparedness Committee –

Pandemic Preparedness Committee meets on the third Friday of the month at 3pm with administration and Infection Management. We review COVID cases and other infectious/communicable diseases presenting in the system and VIRTUA's response to these in regard to PPE, contact tracing, and exposure notification, to name a few items.

This past month we discussed the availability of a second booster (you must schedule through the Burlington County site), fit testing availability, hotline hours and surge plans for increased hotline staff (the employer does NOT have a plan in place), and whether or not a PCR test is necessary to receive Workers' Comp for exposure (waiting on this response).

Even after all this time, the Employer lacked clarity on many questions posed. They could not provide definite answers for a number of items which is disconcerting. We hoped they had learned from past mistakes and bumbled undertakings of trying to staff the hotline only to have people wait on hold for hours, and the same for notice of exposure from just a few contact tracers for the entire system, for examples. Every meeting we have given suggestions and pressed for what we think staff needs when they are not well and in need of guidance. We want a streamlined approach to the hotline, fast exposure notification and timely testing resources for all staff. The Employer's approach is muddy, at best.

Reps -

We are always looking for more Reps! The training is easy. We provide education and ongoing support to learn the contract and support yourself and your peers. Even if you are a new nurse, you can become a Rep! Let me know if you are interested!! 856 296 6439

We Are Stronger Together!! - Beth

Committee on Political Education (COPE)

I thought since we've had quite a few new hires I'd review what COPE is all about. Of course, politics can be a touchy subject, but what our HPAE Committee on Political Education (COPE) does is strive to "educate our elected officials about what is really going on in the healthcare system and to fight for change."

Once a month the members of each local's COPE committee get on a Zoom call. We go over any events that elected officials invite us to and we take a vote if we want to support them. These events are opportunities to talk one on one with elected officials about safe staffing and other healthcare related issues. Unfortunately, with Covid we have had to put these on hold for a bit, but we have recently started attending again. At these monthly meetings we also discuss who we would like to endorse for public office. Prior to an election, a member of the public policy team sends out questionnaires to each candidate and a subcommittee goes over their answers. The subcommittee makes recommendations which are then voted on by the COPE members. One of our goals this June is to increase membership in COPE. Despite what many believe, unions do not donate money to politicians from union dues. COPE relies on individual members to contribute, usually bi-weekly. I contribute 1.50 each pay. Any member who would like to contribute can fill out an authorization form on HPAE.org, mail it in, or hand it to me.

Another function of COPE is to get out the vote. Once we have decided who gets our endorsement, we put in time and effort to get that person elected. We do this through phone banks and canvassing, although Covid has made the latter difficult. We would really like more of our members to be involved this year with **Get Out the VOTE (GOTV)**. In the past, folks who phone banked or canvassed got paid \$25/hr for their time. I have done this several times before and, although it can feel awkward at first, it wasn't hard at all. I will post more about this on our FB page when opportunities arise. The mid-term elections are this year so it is vital that you make sure you're registered to vote. Don't just vote in presidential elections, the elections in between are just as important, if not more so. Please help to make your healthcare UNION voice heard!

Yours in solidarity,

Melody Schantz, Secretary Treasurer, COPE co-chair







Grievance Chair

Greeting from your Grievance Chair,

As many of you should know – you have the right to representation. In the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) Sec 7 there is the right of union-represented employees, upon request, to have their representative present during an interview that the employee reasonably believes could lead to discipline. This right was first articulated by the Supreme Court in the case NLRB vs J. Weingarten, Inc. In that case the Supreme Court found that Sec 7 of the NLRA protects employees who refuse to submit to certain interviews without a requested representative present. Employers violate the NLRA if they proceed with investigatory interviews and refuse representation.




Any meeting may be an “investigatory interview” providing the following occurs:

-  a manager or supervisor is seeking to question an employee
-  The questioning part of the investigation is into the employees' performance or work conduct. During interview, management may require an employee to defend, explain or admit misconduct or work performance issues that may form a basis for discipline or termination.
-  The employee reasonably believes that the investigation may result in termination, discipline or other adverse consequences to their working conditions.
-  The employee must request a union representative. Employers are not required to advise employees of their right to representation

At times, it might not be made clear to you that this is an investigation. As we have seen incidents on the rise of personal texts or emails from managers to staff inquiring about incidents. “A friendly stop in my office for a chat” as well as requests for statements, pictures and emails to be sent in to managers are a tactic.

Despite being told that the meeting is not investigatory or may lead to discipline, the nature of the meeting may change as it progresses.

So always remember to ask:

-  Is this meeting investigatory?
-  Could this meeting lead to a discipline?
-  Do I need a union Rep present?

★ If **YES** to any of these ?”s ★
call your Union Rep immediately!

You have the right to request a union rep or colleague to accompany you in a meeting or postpone such meeting until one is available. Our contract allows for up to a 24 hours postponement in order to secure a union representative.

If employers declines such request, this is a violation of the NLRA and constitutes an unfair labor practice.

In the peak of the short staffing crisis, disciplines and termination are on the rise. With Nurse Burn out at an all-time high and moral at an all-time low, we need to stay vigilant and protect ourselves. Know your rights, protect yourself and your job. Know policy and procedure, and be there for one another. When in doubt research and/ or reach out. Be there for one another – together we are stronger. And Knowledge is power. Have each other's back, like we have yours!

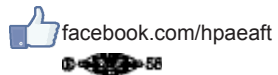
Yours in Union Solidarity,
Bonnie T

Bonnie Terwilliger, RN~BSN (Cardiac Cath Lab)
HPAE Local 5105 Grievance Chair



A Newsletter for the
members of HPAE Local 5105

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Frigid February Wage reopener Flying Event - It was 8 degrees but members STILL showed up!!