



We Keep Our Patients Safe and Healthy (HB1868/SB5751) It's High Time That Legislation Does the Same for Us!

Valley Medical Center Colleagues,

As the Nurse Staffing Committee members at Valley Medical Center, we are excited to share that our legislation to address staffing standards, staffing committees, breaks/overtime and enforcement has been introduced in the Legislature: House Bill 1868/Senate Bill 5751.

Having worked with management to address short staffing and staffing complaints, we are writing to share what's in the bill and why we support it. And we're writing to ask that you, too, advocate with us in the coming weeks to make that a reality.

We are running out of time before crisis staffing and closures become the new norm in our work. For many of us, crisis staffing is already the new norm. And we are disappointed in the responses and lack of action by management, year after year.

We know what our patients need, and we know what we need to do our work. Our bill brings together our best ideas straight from our experience:

- HB 1868/SB 5751 strengthens enforcement of our Nurse Staffing Committees and expands the inclusion of job classes represented. We know our work is a team sport – none of us can succeed if our colleagues are continually short staffed. It's time our Nurse Staffing Committees become Hospital Staffing Committees to reflect that reality.
- HB 1868/SB 5751 will close the many loopholes in enforcement of our existing Breaks, Overtime & Staffing Committee laws. It is well past time that we are, in reality, given to our breaks. And when we work tirelessly throughout the year with management to build and agree upon staffing matrices that keep our patients safe, CEOs cannot be allowed to simply ignore that work.
- And HB 1868/SB 5751 sets safe, minimum staffing standards for RNs, CNAs, Emergency Department Techs and Monitor Techs to ensure that frontline staff are not forced to take dangerous patient loads. We are every day risking our licenses and patient safety because our calls for investment in hiring have been ignored for years. Our colleagues understandably choose to leave their jobs for higher paying traveling positions and facilities with better staffing. Our state should be a destination for healthcare workers, and we can do so by ensuring staffing standards in every hospital, informed by the research and our professional standards.

On all these issues, responses from UW Medicine management at Valley Medical Center have fallen far short of adequate. Frankly, we have heard it all, and it's not enough:

- They stopped paying into our 403B retirement accounts in July 2020, only to give themselves their year-end bonuses and the outgoing CEO \$7.5 million.
- We have forced them into negotiations on REAL Retention Bonuses after they offered us \$250 and the "Gift of Time."
- The abuse of call in the OR and procedural units has led to an exodus of experienced staff.
- They have claimed that hiring more staff will cost too much, yet they are now spending millions on costly traveling nurses and continue to give bonuses to their top executives.
- And they have pointed to the overall lack of workforce to fill new positions. We agree workforce development must be prioritized – and believe that minimum staffing standards and stronger enforcement of existing laws is a necessary part of that. New entrants will not stay in our field if the job doesn't improve – we are all seeing the turnover. If we make employers focus on the top priority of healthcare workers – staffing – some people will opt back into practice, others will enter for the first time and stay, and we will be best positioned to compete as we offer the best jobs in the country.
- When we ask for staffing standards, hospital administrators claim it's a one-size-fits-all approach that's too inflexible to meet the needs of our hospital. But if our staffing committees were fully empowered to deliver on their job – and more job classes included at the table – we could actually make staffing decisions that are right for our hospital. And they frequently tell us that minimum staffing standards would cause our Emergency Rooms to overflow with patients waiting to be seen – and yet that is exactly what is happening now, with no end in sight.
- They've even claimed minimum staffing standards would lead to closure of our hospitals, even though there's no evidence in other states with these standards.

We've known the solutions to these problems for as long as they've existed. But we cannot continue bargaining year after year without full-scale attention to fixing them. We need the State to step in and support our professions – and our patients. Our legislation will get us on the right track, but just like in bargaining, we are going to have to fight for it.

We are ready to do so and hope you will join us.

Sincerely,

The Nurse Staffing Committee at Valley Medical Center

Chris Lopez, RN General Medicine, Co-Chair
Kelci Berto, RN Surgery
Cori Lucas, RN CCU/ED Float Pool
Caesar Tuguinay, RN Med/Surg Float Pool
Lena Martin, RN ED

Ariane Laird, RN ED
Dawn Seltz, RN Pediatrics
Jennifer Cook, RN Joint and Spine Center
Andrea Thompson, RN General Surgery
Liz Dryfoos, RN The Birth Center



"Writing your legislators will ensure you have your voice heard regarding the need for safe staffing and strong laws around adequate breaks. As we see our fellow colleagues leave the profession due to burnout it is important to take back control and out of the hands of administrators. Safe staffing is essential to caring for our community and providing them with safe competent care. Use your voice now to create collective change for the future of Healthcare in Washington." Cori Lucas, RN, ED/ICU Float Pool



WA Safe + Healthy
HEALTHCARE WORKERS FOR PATIENT SAFETY

Email your legislators in support of HB 1868/ SB 5751

<https://1199nw.org/3rozy5K>



Surgical Tech Training Info Session
Coming in March

Renton Technical College has partnered with our Multi-Employer Training Fund (TF) to create a program that you can take while you continue working a VMC. If you are eligible, the TF will pay for you to go to school!

Surg Tech Info Session

Monday, March 14
Noon

Register in advance for this meeting:
<https://1199nw.org/3siKUsq>



After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. Contact Mel Bermendez-Felix from the Training Fund at (425) 306-6068 or Ronco Cole, Valley SEIU Organizer, at (425) 306-8527 for more information.

We are more powerful when management understands that what the bargaining team is asking for at the bargaining table is supported by workers across the hospital. Stand in solidarity with our coworkers by telling Valley Medical Center to do better by accepting the current proposal from our Retention Bonus Bargaining Team!

The members of our Retention Bonus Bargaining Team are fighting hard and doing a great job to win the best bonus possible for everyone.

Mary Ann Gibbs – EVS, Housekeeper
Kelci Berto – Surgery RN
Julie Wise – Onc Clinic, MA
Orysya Zhuk – COV-UC, MA
Adrienne Nixon – Lab, Med Tech
Jake McMurray – Radiology, X-ray Tech
Jesse Martinez – Radiology, MRI Tech
Lynda Roberson – VDIS, Ultrasound Tech

Vivian Nguyen – Pharmacy, Clinical Pharmacist
Morine Kahlon – Microbiology Lab, Lab Tech
Lena Martin – Emergency Department, RN
Caesar Tuguinay – Float Pool, RN
Chris Lopez – General Medicine, RN
Cori Lucas – ED/ICU Float Pool, RN
Liz Dryfoos – Birth Center, RN
Dawn Seltz – Pediatrics, RN

Valley Retention Bonus Bargaining Update

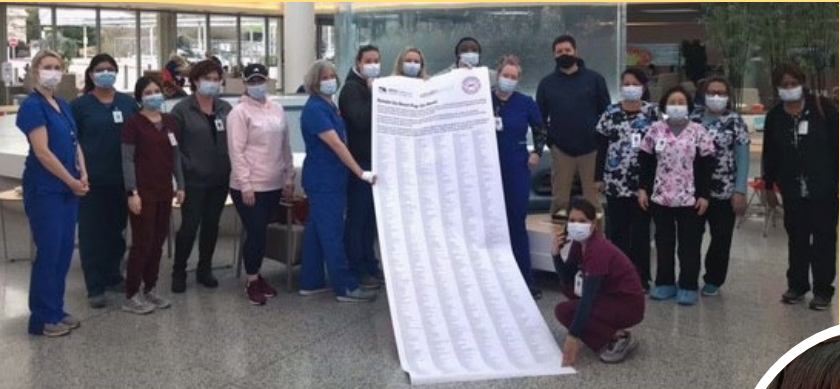
Support our bargaining team by showing up and showing out by attending the virtual VMC Board of Commissioners meeting:

Monday, February 7
5:30pm

<https://1199nw.org/3oorrFD>



Our Retention Bonus Bargaining Team has met with management twice to negotiate a Retention Bonus for employees at Valley Medical Center. There is still much difference between what our bargaining team has proposed for everybody and what management is proposing. These negotiations are happening because in November of 2021 thousands of healthcare workers at VMC came together by signing a petition and marching through the hospital to deliver it to management. As union members, our strength comes from unity and numbers.



“We have worked so hard for the last two years through the pandemic without complaining. We have been short staffed, limited to no PPE, have been scared to get sick and take it to our families but we came to work because our patients needed us. We deserve what we are asking for and more. We need to be valued.” **Orysya Zhuk, MA-C, Covington Urgent Care Clinic**

Donate Vacation Hours
to Our Dedicated Bargaining Team

We invite everyone to support your bargaining team by donating vacation hours. Bargaining Team members should not have to lose hours or burn through all their vacation time if a bargaining session is scheduled during a time they are also scheduled to work.

Download the form with this link or scan this QR code with your phone camera

<https://forms1199nw.org/vacation-donation-vmc/>



“Valley says our mission is to care for our community as family. Support our Valley family by donating some of the vacation hours to your bargaining team members. We are out there fighting for each and every one of us. Help us help you.” **Betty Ann Reid, Breast Center, Mammography**



“Despite being undervalued, low-wage health workers make essential contributions during the pandemic and beyond. My colleagues and I are working extra shifts and risking our family’s lives during the pandemic. ‘We are just another body,’ ‘That’s it. No more, no less. The lack of appreciation for all our sacrifices. We are ‘underpaid, overlooked and forgotten about, but yet depended upon,’ while others on the front line who are deemed ‘important’ are valued differently. Valley responds to our sacrifices simply stating – ‘This is what you signed up for’ despite being declared ‘essential.’ We are feeling overlooked and deprioritized, even expendable. We take pride in our work, but many feel no respect, even as we put their lives on the line. Many expressed frustration – and sometimes anger that the COVID-19 pandemic has already upended so many aspects of society, the economy, and our lives. I hope that it will also upend our long-standing notions of who deserves to be valued. I pray there is a redirection, and that we stop doing things the same old way and listen to those who don’t have a real voice. United we stand, divided we fall: Union is strength.” **Michelle Dunn, Surg Tech, The Birth Center**