

# WHAT'S A UNION?



## DEMOCRACY IN THE WORKPLACE

Oregon AFSCME represents over 8,000 workers at OHSU, from billing specialists and medical coders to resident physicians. Statewide, Oregon AFSCME represents over 29,000 workers.

Being a union employee means having a collective voice at work in determining wages, hours, benefits (healthcare, dental, vision, retirement, tuition reimbursement, etc.), PTO, workplace safety, and work/life balance. It also means having rights at work like a respectful work environment, a disciplinary process, and just cause, which means you can't be fired without reason.

A labor union is formed when workers band together to collectively sign and file union cards, which triggers an election through the National Labor Relations Board. It's a two-step process:

- 1) Majority sign cards
- 2) Majority votes YES to form a union.

When the election is won, union rights take effect and bargaining begins.

## BARGAINING A CONTRACT

As a union member, you have rights through a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), which is a contract that's negotiated between management and a committee of union members who are elected by their co-workers to represent them. The contract or CBA is a legally binding document, a bargaining survey will be distributed for all union members to fill out to voice their priorities regarding wages, benefits, PTO, workplace safety, scheduling, shift and language pay differentials, etc. Once an agreement is reached between management and your union bargaining team, it is voted on by the membership. After the contract is voted on, it is signed, ratified, then goes into effect. You do not pay dues until you receive the benefits of your first contract.

## DUES

Dues are funds that are used to keep the union functioning, similar to a civic, faith-based, cultural, or professional association. It takes funding to keep a union viable, to enforce contracts, to pay legal and administrative costs, and to uphold the interests of union members.

The amount of dues is determined by the membership. Dues would be **between** 1.27% of gross pay (meaning pay before taxes, and does not include overtime). For example, if you made \$1000.00 a paycheck, you would pay \$12.70 in dues.

## YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS TO FORM A UNION

Under the National Labor Relations Act, you have the right to organize a union to negotiate with your employer over your terms and conditions of employment. This includes your right to distribute union literature, wear union buttons t-shirts, or other insignia (except in unusual "special circumstances"), solicit coworkers to sign union authorization cards, and discuss the union with coworkers. Supervisors and managers cannot spy on you (or make it appear that they are doing so), coercively question you, threaten you or bribe you regarding your union activity or the union activities of your co-workers. You can't be fired, disciplined, demoted, or penalized in any way for engaging in these activities.

Your employer cannot prohibit you from talking about or soliciting for a union during non-work time, such as before or after work or during break times; or from distributing union literature during non-work time, in non-work areas, such as parking lots or break rooms. Also, restrictions on your efforts to communicate with co-workers cannot be discriminatory. For example, your employer cannot prohibit you from talking about the union during working time if it permits you to talk about other non-work-related matters during working time.

<https://www.nlr.gov/about-nlr/rights-we-protect/the-law/employees/your-rights-during-union-organizing>

**Questions? Want to get more involved?**

Contact Sarah Thompson | (503) 807-0675 | [sthompson@oregonafscme.org](mailto:sthompson@oregonafscme.org)

Dear coworkers at OHSU Hillsboro,

We've seen many changes at our hospital over the past few years—a new name, new managers, new protocols—and we want a voice in these turbulent times to ensure that staff and patients alike feel safe and secure and that we are doing all that we can for our communities.

For a real seat at the table, we are joining our OHSU counterparts in AFSCME Local 328 in order to:

- Advocate for ourselves and coworkers to work in an environment that's free from bullying and retaliation
- Help create work protocols and standards for quality patient care and safety
- Ensure adequate resources to do our jobs safely and effectively
- Support each other and join the 8,000 AFSCME members working in the OHSU system throughout the region
- Collaborate with other OHSU staff and union leaders to protect what we like about our hospital and improve areas of collaboration, communication, and morale

During this uncertain time, we need to stick together. Let's start by joining with AFSCME Local 328—and thousands of OHSU employees across the state—for a real voice on the job.