

News Release

For Immediate Release
October 22, 2020

Contact:
Matt O'Connor
860-221-5696
moconnor@afct.org

Backus Hospital Nurses Secure New Contract That Ensures “Great Quality Care” for Region

Local, state and national union leaders laud membership vote to ratify a four-year collective bargaining agreement that resolves a months-long labor dispute

NORWICH, Conn.—Registered nurses at the William W. Backus Hospital in Norwich, Conn., yesterday voted nearly unanimously to approve a settlement with the hospital, which followed a two-day strike. The agreement reached Saturday with Hartford HealthCare (HHC), which operates the 213-bed acute care facility, improves protective gear policies and empowers the caregivers to address staffing issues. The pact also resolves long-standing recruitment and retention concerns by making significant economic investments in the workforce.

“The overwhelming support in favor of this agreement proves what we’ve all seen throughout this pandemic: nurses united can never be divided,” said Backus Federation of Nurses President Sherri Dayton. “The road to get here has not been easy, and we’re grateful to our patients and the entire region for having our backs every step of the way. Now we can focus on what we do best—delivering the great quality care all of our patients deserve,” added Dayton, a registered nurse who works in Backus Hospital’s emergency department.

“From day one, our member nurses made clear their top priority was safe patient care,” said AFT Connecticut President Jan Hochadel. “Their efforts were always aimed at ensuring they could work in an environment that empowers them to provide it safely and consistently. This contract improves their working conditions, which means their patients’ conditions are improved, too.” Hochadel also serves as an American Federation of Teachers vice president.

AFT President Randi Weingarten said, “Unfortunately, sometimes it takes a strike to ensure that the things we hold most dear are secured. We have been fighting for the safety and well-being of our Norwich, Conn., community, our members and their families during the worst pandemic this country has seen in a century. Our members have been the frontlines of this health emergency. We are relieved that Backus Hospital finally recognized this, as shown by its agreement to a deal that gives the Backus healthcare professionals a real say in the working conditions that are their patients’ healing conditions. It provides nurses with the personal protective equipment they need

to be able to do their jobs safely and pays them a competitive wage. That all translates into a stronger workforce of nurses who can provide a higher quality of care. Everyone will be safer, and that's what this comes down to: safety during an unsafe time."

The four-year collective bargaining agreement is effective immediately and additionally provides rooms for breastfeeding mothers, decreases employees' insurance premiums and retains nurses' rights to daily overtime. The local union's members had been working under their previous contract, which expired Jul. 31st.

#

The Backus Federation of Nurses, AFT Local 5149, represents approximately 415 registered nurses at the Hartford HealthCare (HHC)-owned William W. Backus Hospital in Norwich and its partner medical facilities.

AFT Connecticut's 30,000 members include approximately 7,500 RNs, licensed practical nurses (LPNs), technologists and allied health professionals in 28 affiliated local unions across the state.

The AFT represents 1.7 million pre-K through 12th-grade teachers; paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel; higher education faculty and professional staff; federal, state and local government employees; nurses and healthcare workers; and early childhood educators.