

# UNIONS 101



## WHAT IS A UNION?

A union is a group of two or more workers who come together to build a workplace which upholds high standards, provides safe working conditions, and values fairness and transparency. Unions give nurses and health care workers legal protections to advocate for their patients and their colleagues in order to ensure high-quality health care, protect the rights of patients, nurses and health care workers, and create safe working conditions.

## WHAT DO UNIONS DO?

Unions give working people a voice to promote and protect the interests of all workers and the people they serve. Unions democratically elect their leaders and collectively bargain with employers to secure written agreements on issues like patient care, workplace safety, working conditions, benefits, pay and more.

Unions represent workers in disciplinary processes, advocate for laws and regulations that protect working families, and offer a range of education, training and support services to help members outside of the workplace and build strong local communities.

## HOW DO WORKERS FORM A UNION?

When workers decide to come together to improve their workplace, they connect with a union and start organizing their own local union chapter. Local workers talk with colleagues who share a common interest in improving their workplace. Once a majority of workers show

support for a union, they sign union authorization cards which are filed with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)—an independent federal agency which protects the rights of private sector workers and oversees fair union elections.

At this point, an employer can choose to voluntarily recognize workers' decision or force a hearing and election with the NLRB. If necessary, the NLRB holds a hearing with workers and the employer to determine union eligibility, the size of the local union chapter, election details and other logistics. When an election is set, all workers in the potential chapter are eligible to vote.

If a simple majority of workers vote to join a union, then negotiations between workers and the employer begin to determine each party's rights and responsibilities within the workplace.

## WHAT IS ONA?

The Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) represents a diverse community of 20,000 nurses and health care professionals throughout Oregon.

Together, we use our collective power to advocate for critical issues impacting patients, nurses, and health care professionals including a more effective, affordable and accessible healthcare system; better working conditions for all health care professionals; and healthier communities.

For more information visit [www.OregonRN.org](http://www.OregonRN.org).

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ONA is an affiliate of the American Nurses Association, AFT and AFL-CIO.