

# Homecare workers get retirement, harassment policy in new contract

30,000 workers will get \$15 an hour under the new contract.

By Don McIntosh

About 30,000 Oregon home care workers will get \$15 an hour and protections against on-the-job sexual harassment in their new two-year union contract. Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 503 and the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) reached tentative agreement Sept. 4 on the terms of the deal. The contract covers workers

employed through the state's home care registry who provide in-home care for senior and disabled individuals, whether paid privately or through Medicaid.

Under the new contract, worker base pay will rise 35 cents an hour (2.4%), on Jan. 1, 2020, to \$15 an hour. In the second year of the agreement, workers expect to gain access to a retirement savings plan for the first time: DHS and the governor have committed to seek legislative approval for a 5% wage increase that would be deposited into individual accounts in the

state-sponsored retirement savings plan OregonSaves. If they choose to, workers would be allowed to put some or all of the increase into wages instead.

"What we're trying to do is stabilize the workforce," says Local 503 spokesperson Ben Morris. "As the baby boomers start to age into needing long-term care, we really want a stable work force. And a retirement plan connected to the job makes people see the value of staying long term."

Meanwhile, Local 503 says the sexual harassment policy is

a first-in-the-nation for home care workers. The new contract sets up a process for reporting inappropriate behavior to DHS. Workers reporting harassment will continue to get paid while DHS investigates, but won't have to go back into the home in question. DHS must determine that the home is safe before other home care workers are allowed back into the home.

"We've already gotten calls from other SEIU locals around the country who say this is a great idea and they want to do something similar," Morris said.

Morris says improved wages and working conditions are benefiting not just home care workers but their clients. Since 2001, when state-paid home care workers settled their first union contract, annual employee turnover has fallen from 50% to 27%.

"Turnover is so important in long term care that it's often used as a stand-in for quality," Morris said, "so we want to get that as far down as we can."

A ratification vote among home care workers is under way and will wrap up by Oct. 1.

# Workers at OHSU ratify new deal after managers outed for trolling

Over 6,000 workers will get \$1,000 bonuses and raises totaling 9.5% in new three-year deal.

Nearly 7,000 employees of Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) will get raises and other improvements in their new three-year union contract. AF-SCME Local 328 reported that

members ratified the new agreement by a margin of 98.9% in votes counted Sept. 9.

Under its terms, they'll get a lump sum bonus payment of \$1,000 and an across-the-board raise of 3.25% now, plus 3% raises on July 1, 2020, and July 1, 2021. Workers will also get an extra 50 cents an hour for weekend work and \$1 an hour

for training co-workers.

The contract also provides an additional vacation day each year; annual TriMet passes for \$50 a year; and allows for additional stewards to cover evening/night shifts and large departments. OHSU also agreed to contribute \$100,000 a year to an employee hardship fund managed by the union that can pro-

vide relief to employees for needs related to food, transportation, housing insecurity or education.

Though the contract signifies labor peace, Local 328 is still going forward with a legal case against OHSU: In an unfair labor practice charge filed Aug. 8 with the Oregon Employment Relations Board, Local 328 says

OHSU violated its duty to bargain in good faith when HR vice president Daniel Forbes and fellow management bargaining team member Patrick Frengle used fake Twitter and Facebook accounts to pose as employees in an effort to undermine the union on social media. A hearing on the case is scheduled for Oct. 1.



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