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Wills Eye Nurses and Technical Specialists Overwhelmingly Ratify a New Three-Year Contract That Respects Their Professions and Acknowledges the Critical Care They Provide



Wills Eye Nurses and Technicians celebrate their new contract.

Philadelphia, PA – Today, 96 nurses and technical specialists who practice at Wills Eye Hospital voted overwhelmingly, with 98% of the vote, to ratify a new three-year contract that further respects their professions and the invaluable care they provide.

“On the heels of the worst pandemic of our lifetimes, the system that’s supposed to support healthcare professionals, and therefore patients, is in crisis,” says PASNAP President Maureen May, R.N., a longtime Temple University Hospital nurse. “Hospital staff numbers have dwindled here and nationwide due to burnout and short-sighted, bottom-line decisions. This contract, with its emphasis on measures to improve retention, acknowledges the contributions of frontline caregivers and by prioritizing their well-being, also prioritizes patient care. We are thrilled.”

The new three year agreement contains a hefty economic package designed to improve retention that includes an increase in retirement contribution, better vesting language, and wage increases of up to

14.5%, with the largest increase coming in the first year of the agreement. The caregivers' new three-year contract also includes:

- **Four Weeks of Fully Paid Parental Leave.** For the first time, Union members who have worked at Wills Eye for a year are eligible for up to four paid weeks of parental leave usable within 12 months after the birth or the arrival of the adoptive child in the home.
- **Workplace Violence Prevention.** Union members won three seats on the Hospital's Safety Committee, which creates policy surrounding protections for caregivers. Their presence on the committee – for the very first time – gives frontline caregivers a meaningful seat at the table in advocating for their own safety and protection.

“Having representation on the Hospital Safety Committee is a key win,” says Beth Connor, RN, a nurse in the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU). “Our unity throughout this process ensured that frontline workers will be heard and be a part of the decision-making regarding safety in the hospital.”

- **Pandemic Language:** A new addition to the contract inspired by the significant challenges presented by the COVID pandemic, Union members will meet with the hospital within 14 days of a declared emergency to review policies and procedures regarding PPE (personal protective equipment such as masks), testing, health and safety measures, working conditions, and best clinical practices. This provision gives frontline caregivers an avenue for input regarding their own protection and their patients'.

“This contract – our first post-pandemic contract – represents the collective effort of each and every member of our team,” says Melinda Hayes, a Surgical Technician in the Operating Room. “We are a specialty hospital that worked through the pandemic without the incentives other hospitals offered. This contract protects and rewards us. But more importantly, it allows us to better care for our patients. We are very proud of it.”

“In a post-pandemic world, it's important to make sure that we are secure at our jobs and that our patients are protected,” says Vincent Ross, RN, a PACU nurse at Wills Eye Hospital. “This contract does that. It took many hours and was hard-fought, but in the end, we were able to obtain a fair and equitable contract for the next three years.”

PASNAP, the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, represents 9,000 frontline nurses and allied professionals across Pennsylvania. It was founded on the belief that patients receive better care when critical care staff have a voice to advocate for their patients and themselves.