

UM RESIDENT & FELLOW ALLIANCE (UMRFA)



GENERAL QUESTIONS:

1. How long will this take?

- Building a strong union takes time. Winning an election and winning the first contract requires a lot of organization, planning, and collective support. Our goal is to have a vote to formalize our union this year and then promptly begin the process of negotiating a first contract. There are a lot of variables that go into negotiating a first contract, but we can expect it to take a few months at best to more than a year. During the interim period where we are officially unionized, but don't have a finalized first contract, we will still benefit from the rights and benefits of union membership (e.g. Weingarten Rights, status quo protections, etc.). The time to get recognized and negotiate a contract varies depending on the approach of the administration and their willingness to have a strong cooperative working relationship. The more we can show that we are united and that we won't be pushed around, the better.

2. Do I have to pay union dues?

- Yes, all members will be asked to pay dues after our first contract is negotiated and we vote to ratify it. Most dues structures end up being a percentage of wages with many unions paying between 1 and 2%.
- It is common for members to have their dues deducted from their paychecks automatically.
- In addition to having significant power in numbers, we also have power by pooling our resources. Dues help to make sure we have the tools to engage in the priorities that matter to us as a group.
- Dues are used to cover the cost of organizing, negotiating, and enforcing your contract, legal and staff support. Additionally, they include per capita dues paid to AFT National, AFT-Maryland, and the AFL-CIO. As members, we will decide the total amount of dues by their collective vote. We will get to make decisions about how our union's treasury is utilized.
- Building a strong local union takes the resources we raise through our dues and results in assistance from AFT-MD and AFT in negotiating and enforcing our rights, including legal. This can lead to more residents and physicians being organized, and advocating on legislative and policy issues beneficial to residents.
- **No one pays dues until there is a ratified contract in place.**
- Dues are generally mitigated by any increases in salary and other benefits negotiated by the union.

3. Which residency programs have unions?

- 15% of US residency programs have unionized so far with most winning significant gains in the process.
- Notable unionized groups include SUNY, UCLA Health System, Stanford, NYC Health + Hospitals, and Boston Medical Center, among others.

4. What have resident unions accomplished?

Resident unions have won some big victories in the last few years, and we're ready to join the movement! Here are just a few recent examples of contract wins in the past 6 months:

- Keck School of Medicine @ USC: \$10,000 annual housing stipend, 6 weeks paid parental leave, 4 weeks paid vacation.
- University of Vermont: 20% salary increase over 4 years, \$200 bonus per shift for backup coverage, \$75/hour minimum moonlighting pay
- Highland Hospital, NYC: 20% salary increase over 2 years, 8 weeks paid parental leave, \$2000 annual educational fund.
- The House Officer Association @ the University of Michigan recently ratified a contract that had some big wins – A starting pay of \$70,000, a yearly wage increase of 7.25%, and a ratification bonus of \$2000. There are also provisions for an increase in meal allowances and more.

These are **examples and not guarantees** of what we can win during our negotiations. Our wins will depend on our preparation, unity, and tenacity.

INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTS QUESTIONS:

IMMIGRANT EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

If you're an IMG on a J1 visa, this information is for you. The main concepts are:

Regardless of immigration status, you have the same rights under the National Labor Relations Act as all covered employees including the right to:

- Organize with a union to negotiate with your employer concerning your wages, hours, benefits, and other working conditions.
- Talk about working conditions with your co-workers, the public, or a union. • Take action with your co-workers to try to improve your working conditions. • Choose to do some or none of these actions.

Employers must obey immigration laws, if you choose to talk to or take action with your co-workers to improve your working conditions, it is illegal for your employer to use your immigration status against you.

For example:

- Employers cannot threaten to call ICE because you and your co-workers tried to join a union.
- Employers cannot demand that you produce new immigration papers because you talked with your co-workers or a union about your working conditions.

Union-Related Rights of International Workers In the U.S.

Unions are not controlled by the government. Instead, they are associations governed of and by their members. Each union member has an equal right to vote for officers, attend union meetings, and participate in discussions at those meetings regardless of immigration or international employment status.

Every person within the United States, including every international worker and student, has the right to join a union under the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of association. All union members are protected with:

- "Weingarten Rights": the right to have a union representative present when you are meeting with your employer if you reasonably believe that the meeting may result in discipline by the employer.
- It is illegal for an employer to retaliate against you for joining or organizing a union. This includes any recourse that may negatively alter your working relationship.

If your employer is violating any of your rights as an employee, your union can, in many cases, help you address these issues by serving as your advocate. [Important Information About NLRB Investigations for Immigrant Workers](#)

AFT RELATED QUESTIONS

1. Who does the AFT represent?

The 1.7 million member American Federation of Teachers (AFT) includes healthcare, K-12, higher education employees, and public employees. o AFT's healthcare division, AFT Nurses and Health Professionals is one of the largest and fastest growing healthcare unions in the United States with a membership that **includes 200,000 healthcare employees** representing a wide category of professions including **attending, fellow, and resident physicians**, PAs, NPs, CRNAs, RNs, Nurse Midwives, Respiratory Therapists, Physical Therapists, and Occupational Therapists, and many more.

2. What has AFT achieved for residents through collective bargaining?

- New York's Stony Brook Hospital has a seven-step pay scale that ranges from \$67,833 to \$97,127, which includes a \$2,500 resident stipend and a \$3,026 location stipend.
- The New York State/United University Professions Joint Labor Management Committee Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program reimburses the cost of examinations for first-time certification and licensure. The NYS/UUP Program enables employees to improve job-related skills in their profession and gain the knowledge and skills necessary for promotional opportunities and career mobility within the State University of New York (SUNY).
- The Individual Development Awards Program is the most extensive NYS/UUP JLMC program. This award reimburses conferences and exam prep courses up to \$2,000. Each campus is assigned proportional allocations based on the number of UUP-represented employees. Each Campus Professional Development Committee determines award decisions and deadline dates.

3. Where have healthcare workers won recognition with AFT in the recent past?

In 2023, AFT has organized close to 8,300 new members in the healthcare field. The most significant single NLRB election victory this past year (so far) has been AFT Vermont's win of ancillary staff (e.g., nurse aides) and technicians (e.g., EMTs) totaling 2,200 workers at the University of Vermont Medical Center.

Other recent victories include the organization of:

- **110 Residents at Wayne State University**
- 910 diagnostic imaging technicians at Michigan Medicine

- 414 RNs, professionals, and technicians at The University of New Mexico's Sandavol Regional Medical Center.
- 360 RNs at Legacy Mount Hood, Oregon.
- 180 home health and hospice professionals at Providence in Portland, Oregon.
- 62 Physicians, NPs, and nurse midwives at Providence Women's Clinic in Portland, Oregon.
- 25 Physicians, NPs, and PAs at Providence Medford, Oregon.
- **260 Residents at Western Michigan University organized and won an election on April 21st, 2024.**
- **1020 Residents filed for an election at Detroit Medical Center and are awaiting an election order from NLRB.**

4. How will the AFT strength in sectors other than healthcare benefit us as residents and fellows?

Power confers the ability to win gains. For unions, **power comes from an active and involved membership**, outspoken policy advocacy, strong community involvement, and comprehensive political and legislative action. That means support from members throughout Maryland and the country, resources needed, and community and political relationships. When residents and fellows employed by UMMC advocate for enhancing patient care and gaining the rights and benefits you deserve, the entire AFT is with you.

HELPFUL LINKS

- **AFT Nurses and Health Professionals**
<https://www.aft.org/healthcare>
- **National Labor Relations Board**
<https://www.nlr.gov/about-nlr/rights-we-protect/your-rights/employee-rights>
- **US Department of Labor**
<https://www.dol.gov/general/workcenter/unions-101>
- **Alliance of Resident Physicians-AFT-Michigan**
<https://arpunion.com/faq/>
- **AAMCNEWS - Thousands of medical residents are unionizing. Here's what that means for doctors, hospitals, and the patients they serve**
<https://www.aamc.org/news/thousands-medical-residents-are-unionizing-here-s-what-means-doctors-hospitals-and-patients-they>
- **University of Michigan House Officers Association website, including their contract**
<https://hoaumich.org/>