



# Ascension

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**To:** Jeff Weber, RN, WFNHP President  
Jamie Lucas, WFNHP Executive Director

**Cc:** Kristin McManmon, President, Ascension St. Francis Hospital

**From:** Bernie Sherry, Senior Vice President, Ascension, Ministry Market Executive, Ascension Wisconsin  
Monica Hilt, Chief Operating Officer, Ascension Wisconsin

**Date:** December 14, 2020

**Subject:** Response to December 2, 2020 Letter

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*Bernie Sherry*  
*Monica Hilt*

We are in receipt of your letter dated December 2, 2020. As you know, we continue to express our sincerest gratitude for our extraordinary caregivers and associates who have risen to the challenge of the ongoing pandemic. Our frontline associates have been selfless and compassionate in providing extraordinary care under very difficult circumstances. Ascension Wisconsin has been humbled and inspired by our caregivers and the teams that support them.

In order to ease the burden faced by associates, particularly our frontline workers, Ascension Wisconsin re-activated many COVID-19-related benefits effective September 20, 2020. These benefits include the following:

- PTO advance of up to 40 hours per year that can be used to supplement COVID-19-related short-term disability or worker's compensation claims.
- Pandemic furlough pay for work-related COVID-19 exposures, which ensured if an associate needs time off to isolate due to work-related COVID-19 exposure, they were paid prior to the start of workers' compensation.
- Extra shift incentives.

In addition, Ascension offers associates financial hardship support for daily living expenses and other needs. Since April 2020, more than \$237,686 has been distributed to Wisconsin associates.

To support associates, Ascension Wisconsin created Facebook groups connecting associates with co-workers who could help with child care needs. Similarly, our one-stop myCare site features well-being resources addressing resilience, spiritual wellness, EAP and virtual peer

support; access to free counseling and fitness apps; and tools to manage isolation, stress, trauma and more. These and other initiatives have been well received.

Like all health systems, we continue to evaluate this situation to ensure that we provide Ascension Wisconsin associates the support needed to provide excellent patient care. Our frontline associates fulfill vital roles in our healthcare system and we value their contributions and service.

With regard to staffing, healthcare systems throughout the nation have faced staffing challenges during this pandemic. That said, the staffing levels at Ascension St. Francis Hospital align with state and national professional standards of care and applicable guidelines. In order to support our associates, Ascension St. Francis leaders have taken action to continue the improvement of overall staffing. As a result of these efforts, Ascension St. Francis has recently hired individuals for RN and PCA roles. We will continue to explore all avenues and resources available to provide additional support for our associates.

Ascension St. Francis leadership has been continuously meeting with union leadership to address concerns as they arise. Ascension St. Francis leaders will continue to listen to the concerns raised by union leadership in the ongoing bi-weekly meetings and encourage individual associates to raise their concerns related to any outstanding issues. To facilitate that interaction, Ascension St. Francis leaders are in the process of completing routine check-ins with associates and want to encourage associates to participate in opportunities to meet with leaders. We value input from associates, and leadership will do its part to continue open communication moving forward.

Thank you for your concern and for bringing these issues to our attention. Again, we greatly appreciate the work of our associates and our continued partnership.