



## SEPARATING FACTS FROM FICTION ABOUT UNIONIZING

Now that we have expressed interest in forming a union, we might start to hear criticism of unions in general and The Pharmacy Guild in particular. Some corporations spend thousands of dollars on union busting law firms and PR strategists to try to convince pharmacy professionals we don't need representation. This doesn't always happen, but it's important to have all the facts in case our employers take this approach.

Anti-union campaigns are typically driven from the top by corporate pharmacy executives and high-priced attorneys, but they will often enlist supervisors, forcing them to speak against our union (even if they personally disagree). The anti-union campaign is meant to create a lot of noise and distract pharmacy professionals from the real reasons we are joining together in a union—we deserve professional respect and a voice in decisions that affect our patients and our profession.

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**FICTION: “Your union is an outsider.”** Corporate pharmacy executives may try to paint The Pharmacy Guild as a third-party interfering in pharmacy operations or a big business run by “union bosses.” “We’re a family”, they may say. “We want to be able to communicate with you directly, and not have to involve anyone else.”

**FACT: We - the professional employees who keep community pharmacies running day in and day out - are the union.** We make the decisions about what goes into our union contract, what is improved, and what stays the same. A union is us coming together, exercising our legal right to represent ourselves and bargain over conditions that affect our compensation, workplace, patient safety, and professional practice.

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**FICTION: The company may tell us scary stories about how much we will have to pay in dues.** They may say that our union is only interested in getting our money.

**FACT: The improvements in pay, benefits, and working conditions we gain when we win with our union are far greater than the cost of dues.** Remember: we do not pay anything until we have a contract that we vote to accept. Our union is a nonprofit organization that uses



its resources to support, protect, and advance the professional interests of union-represented employees. An organization that does all of that is worth supporting with dues.

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**FICTION: “Unionizing will take resources and/or focus away from patients.”** Corporate pharmacy executives may try to make us feel bad for advocating for the resources and conditions we all know we need to do our jobs well.

**FACT: The conditions we work in are the same conditions patients receive pharmacy services in – having a union helps to improve both.** For example:

- Union contracts can include safe staffing and workload standards that require employers to invest more in patient safety, not less. If the standards are violated, there is a clear process to remedy them, including the possibility of taking staffing matters to a binding resolution process.
- A Professional Practice Committee is negotiated into our union contract and controlled by professionals, like us! This committee meets to address staffing and other patient-safety issues. The PPC has the authority to bring employer representatives to the table to respond to and address our concerns.
- The PPC tracks unsafe conditions through independent documentation tools. This allows union-represented pharmacy professionals to document unsafe conditions that may put patients at risk and protects pharmacy professionals’ licenses in case of a bad outcome.

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**FICTION: The pharmacy will shut down if we unionize.** Corporate pharmacy executives and their spokespeople may say that if we form a union, pharmacies will have to close because we will drive up their operating expenses.

**FACT: The truth is, it’s illegal for a company to close or even threaten to close because employees form a union.** Pharmacy is a profitable business and corporate chains have many competitive advantages in a market dominated by fewer and fewer companies. The recent store closures we’ve seen had nothing to do with employees unionizing and everything to do with corporate mismanagement. This highlights the urgent need for pharmacy professionals to unionize. With a union, we will have a right to review the company’s financials and negotiate protections in the case of policy shifts, cutbacks, corporate ownership changes, and more.

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**FICTION: “You will lose scheduling flexibility if you unionize.”** Executives might make our supervisors tell us that we will be forced into a rigid scheduling system. They may even make comparisons to manufacturing or other types of unionized blue-collar workplaces.

**FACT: Union-represented pharmacy professionals will gain a greater voice in scheduling.** Rather than implementing whatever scheduling system they want, pharmacy corporations will have to negotiate with employees and consider our ideas about how to set our work schedules, including our hours of work, vacations, and more.

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**FICTION: “If you give us one more chance, the company will fix everything.”** Executives may ask us to give them a second chance to fix problems at work or to address our unmet needs. They may say they didn’t know we were dissatisfied with how things are. They may even start treating us better and show new concern for our well-being.

**FACT: Too often when employees give pharmacy corporations a second chance, they are disappointed.** Many executives will say anything to keep employees from unionizing, even if it’s untrue. Even when sympathetic supervisors try to make improvements, they are faced with enormous pressure from the corporate structure and the broader industry. Even if things change temporarily, without a union contract nothing is guaranteed.

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**FICTION: The company may tell us that they will never agree to a union contract.** Or, they’ll say they do not have to agree to what we want in the contract.

**FACT: The truth is, employers are legally required to negotiate with our union in good faith.** They may try to take a stance before we unionize, but it is in their interest to develop a working relationship with The Pharmacy Guild. When we present them with reasonable, intelligent contract proposals, we feel confident we will reach agreement.

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**FICTION: Management may tell us that the union will force us out on strikes— whether we want to or not.** They may tell us if that happens, we will lose our jobs.

**FACT: Our union does not force workers out on strikes. A strike is the decision of the union members.** If there is an issue that the members feel strongly about, we and our co-



workers can vote to go on strike. If a 2/3rds majority of us vote to strike, then and only then would there be a strike. Ninety-eight percent of disputes and contract negotiations are settled without this type of action.

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**FICTION: “You will lose the ability to communicate directly with your supervisor.”** We might be told that we’ll lose our relationship with our Pharmacy Manager or even that we will have to communicate through a union steward.

**FACT: Our relationship and communication with our supervisors doesn’t need to change, unless we want it to.** If the relationship is positive, it will continue to be positive. Where there is room for improvement in relationships, unionizing can help by facilitating open and honest communication about our needs. Real leaders value and appreciate that type of communication, so good supervisors have nothing to be concerned about.

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## What else might an employer do?

**Some companies form an anti-union committee of employees.** These committees are often promised special treatment or promotions for their help in their anti-union campaign. The company knows that if we are united, we can win our right to make positive changes in our workplace. The aim of the anti-union committee is to divide us, create bad feelings among us, and dismantle the unionizing efforts.

**The company may hire a union-busting consultant.** Anti-union consultants, often called “labor relations,” get paid a lot of money to help employers keep employees from exercising their right to form a union. These consultants will write all the anti-union talking points and instruct supervisors to follow consultant-prepared scripts for talking to employees. They may hold meetings themselves, or force managers to hold meetings and read from their script. Employers often pay thousands of dollars per employee, to keep their employees from forming a union, instead of putting that money into better pay, benefits, working conditions and patient safety. They do this because once we unionize, we will have a real voice to make improvements.

**The company may hold captive audience meetings.** We may be required to attend “captive audience” meetings in which the company makes empty promises or tries to scare us about what will happen when we form our union. Most companies don’t come right out and tell



employees they're worried for themselves because with a union the power dynamic changes and employees will have more rights. They usually frame it as though they're worried about what will happen to the employees. Most of what the employer says is either untrue or purposely misleading. That's why it's important to become well-versed in our rights and in union-busting tactics.

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## Don't worry, your rights are protected by federal law!

That's right, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) protects your right to engage in concerted activity with your coworkers. It specifically prohibits employers from interfering with these rights and empowers the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to enforce the law.

### What can't our employer do?

- It is unlawful for any employer to interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees seeking to organize our union. Our rights are protected under Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act, a federal law.
- They cannot tell employees that management will fire or punish employees if they engage in our union activities.
- They cannot bar employees from discussing our union during working hours provided it does not interfere with the work, especially if they allow discussions about any other subjects.
- They cannot ask employees about confidential union matters, meetings, etc.
- They cannot ask employees how they intend to vote.
- They cannot, by the nature of the work assignment, create conditions intended to get rid of an employee because of their union activity.
- They cannot threaten employees or coerce them in any way in an attempt to influence their vote.
- They cannot say unionization will take away the benefits and privileges presently in effect. They cannot promise employee's promotions, raises, or other benefits if they get out of our union or refrain from joining it.



Any of the above acts constitutes a violation of the National Labor Relations Act. If any of these happen, make a note of what occurred and bring it the attention of The Pharmacy Guild.

**Wow, ok. This seems like it might be hard to do. Why are we doing this again?**

Yes, forming our union can be challenging at first, but the more support we gather from our coworkers, the stronger we will become. With our union, we have the power to advocate for our collective stability, dignity, respect, and create a more equitable, sustainable profession for all. Most importantly, unionizing will give us new tools to advocate for the safety and wellbeing of our patients.