



# Nursing Home Workers to Picket Over More Than \$80,000 Dollars in Unpaid Bonuses Wednesday Afternoon in Tonawanda

*Workers Say Downstate Owners Negotiated Multiple Staffing Incentives at Tonawanda Nursing Home But Now Will Not Pay For Shifts Already Worked*



NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, October 24, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- WHO: Nursing Home Workers

WHAT: Informational Picket

WHEN: Wednesday, October 25, 2023  
2:30 pm to 4:30 pm

WHERE:

**\*\*Safire Rehabilitation of the Northtowns, 2799 Sheridan Drive, Tonawanda, NY 14150**

**\*\* Press Conference at 3:30pm \*\***

WHY: Caregivers hit hard by COVID-19 over the last several years have been working without employer promised bonuses since January 2023. Caregivers are represented by 1199SEIU, United Healthcare Workers East.

Union members say they agreed to a variety of bonuses to help properly staff the Tonawanda facility with nurses and aides to help care for residents. There are three bonuses workers should be receiving from the downstate for-profit ownership group, but have not been paid in months or were paid intermittently.

"We are owed thousands of dollars in bonuses that we were promised and agreed upon," said Jennifer Sicignano, Licensed Practical Nurse. "It was past practice and it had been paid. The employer stopped it abruptly without any rhyme or reason. We come in and do our job and we work extra to help with our families. We come in and get our paycheck and it's 3/4 less than what you expected. When we try to bring it to the owners, they tell us we are greedy and ungrateful, but we worked for it and took care of our residents and promised the bonuses," said Sicignano.

1199SEIU negotiated a COVID bonus, a pick-up shift bonus, and a short-staffing bonus with the employer. For employees who work on a unit with active COVID-19 cases, the agreed upon bonus is \$35 per shift. To assist with filling open shifts, alleviate critical staffing, and improve resident care, the agreed upon pick-up shift bonus is \$50-\$75 per shift. Lastly, when the employer is unable to fill open shifts and employees are working short as a result, the agreed upon staffing bonus is \$100 per shift (increasing to \$150 per shift when an employee works alone on a unit).

Initially, the owners of Safire Rehabilitation implemented bonuses without a signed agreement. However, recently and without notice, the employer unilaterally ceased some of the bonuses, while maintaining others. In an effort to enforce these agreements, 1199SEIU has filed grievances and requested arbitration. The for-profit employer has continued to delay the process, refusing to accept offered dates for meetings and verbally offering settlements with little to no follow-through. In some cases, payments have been made to workers, though incorrectly, further complicating efforts towards resolution.

More recently this week, after yet another meeting, a settlement was nearly possible to pay the monies owed and to continue the bonuses moving forward. However, the employer again refused to sign the agreement and subsequently also ceased paying the COVID bonuses. A few weeks later, Management failed to pay a quarterly shift bonus that has been in place since the previous contract more than 2 years ago and has since promised and failed twice to pay it.

With the recurrence of COVID in the facility, employees say the COVID bonus is owed since September. "Since September 19, we had the very first case of COVID," said Jennifer Sicignano, Licensed Practical Nurse. At that time, we are to get \$35 per day if you worked on the floor with a COVID patient. Everyone who works on the floor with a COVID patient, should get that pay. We've gone 3 paychecks without the COVID pay per day owed," said Sicignano.

About 70 Nursing home workers at the facility in Tonawanda are represented by 1199SEIU, United Healthcare Workers East work as Certified Nurse Assistants, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Unit Clerks.

On Background:

According to the New York State Department of Health, Safire Care of the Northtowns is a 100-bed facility and is owned and operated by Judy Landa, Richard Platschek, Solomon Abramczyk, Robert Schuck, and Moshe Steinberg[1].

In 2022, the nursing home received a documented fine for short-staffing.[2] According to Center for Medicaid Services, Safire Rehabilitation of the Northtowns was out of compliance with staffing standards 45 out of 90 days in the 4th quarter last year.

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1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East is the largest and fastest-growing healthcare union in America. We represent over 400,000 nurses and caregivers throughout Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Florida. Our mission is to achieve quality care and good jobs for all.

[www.1199seiu.org](http://www.1199seiu.org)

[\[1\] NYS Health Profile: Safire Rehabilitation of Northtowns, LLC](#)

[\[2\] Two Safire nursing homes fined \\$56,000 for violations \(buffalonews.com\)](#)

April Ezzell

1199SEIU Communications

+1 716-449-1620

april.ezzell@1199.org

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