# Attending Physicians at ChristianaCare Petition to Form Union Amid Frustration Over Working Conditions



Attending physicians at ChristianaCare, Delaware's largest health system, are petitioning to form a union, the first of its kind in the Philadelphia region for hospital-employed attending doctors. Over two-thirds of the approximately 450 attending physicians at Christiana Hospital in Newark, Wilmington Hospital, and the Middletown Free-Standing Emergency Department have signed the petition for representation by the Doctors Council, part of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

The physicians' drive, informed to ChristianaCare administrators this week, reflects their frustration over working conditions exacerbated since the COVID-19 pandemic. They cite high patient loads, inadequate support, and increased administrative tasks without corresponding time adjustments as key issues. During the pandemic, workloads intensified, and despite a decrease in patients, these conditions did not improve. Physicians report staying after hours to complete tasks, affecting their personal time.

The petition follows last year's creation of a union for physicians-in-training at Penn Medicine’s Philadelphia hospitals, marking a broader trend among physicians to unionize to address workplace concerns. Historically, most physicians owned their practices, but the shift towards hospital employment has contributed to these unionization efforts.

ChristianaCare has acknowledged the physicians' right to unionize and stated its commitment to maintaining a direct relationship with the doctors. The next step is a National Labor Relations Board-administered union election in the coming weeks.

If successful, this union would represent attending doctors, a rarity in the U.S. health system, where fewer than one in ten physicians were in unions as of 2019.