**JD-16-21**
**Lake Katrine, NY**

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**
**BEFORE THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD**
**DIVISION OF JUDGES**

**NCRNC, LLC D/B/A NORTHEAST CENTER FOR REHABILITATION AND BRAIN INJURY**

**and** **Cases 03–CA–252090**
**03–CA–254186**

**1199SEIU UNITED HEALTHCARE WORKERS EAST**

**and** **Case 03–CA–255155**

**TARA GOLDEN, an Individual**

***Alice Pender, Esq.,*** for the General Counsel.
***Dawn Lanouette, Esq.****, (Hinman, Howard & Kattell, LLP),* for the Respondent.
***Amelia K. Tuminaro, Esq.****, (Gladstein, Reif & Meginniss, LLP)*, for Charging Party SEIU.
***Lisa F. Joslin*** **and** ***Nancy Williamson, Esqs.****, (Gleason, Dunn, Walsh & O'Shea)*, for Charging Party Golden.

## DECISION

### Statement of the Case

**Ira Sandron, Administrative Law Judge**. This matter arises from a consolidated complaint and notice of hearing (the complaint) issued on May 19, 2020, based on unfair labor practice charges that 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East (the Union) and Tara Golden (Golden), an individual, filed against NCRNC, LLC d/b/a Northeast Center for Rehabilitation and Brain Injury (the Respondent or the Company).

Pursuant to notice, I conducted a remote trial by Zoom from January 25–29, 2021, during which I afforded the parties a full opportunity to be heard, to examine and cross-examine witnesses, and to introduce evidence.

### Issues

(1) Did the Respondent violate Section 8(a)(1) by the following:

(a) On October 28, 2019,[1] by Dave Camerota (Camerota), chief operating officer, Upstate Services Group New York (USG), the Respondent's parent company, create the impression of surveillance of employees' union activity?

(b) On the same date, by Camerota, threaten Unit Manager (UM) Golden about her perceived union activity?

(c) In about October or November, by Camerota and the Respondent's labor consultants, instruct its supervisors and agents to interrogate employees about their support for the union, surveil their activities, and report back?

(d) On November 11, by Keith Peraino (Peraino), the Respondent's chief labor consultant, interrogate Community Support Services (CSS) Supervisor Josh Endy (Endy) about the union activities of other employees?

(e) On the same date, by Peraino, threaten Endy with a lawsuit by stating that the Respondent and the Union were going to sue him for passing out union authorization cards?

(f) About November 12, by Peraino, threaten licensed practical nurse (LPN) Kelly Leonard (Leonard) by stating that the Union could not protect her nursing license?

(g) About the same date, by John Walters (Walters), head of maintenance, tell Leonard that the Respondent had surveillance video of her talking to employees and giving them authorization cards, thereby creating an impression that her union activities were under surveillance?

(h) About November 18, by Mary Pat Carhart (Carhart), USG regional vice president of clinical affairs, interrogate Golden about her perceived union activity?

(i) On November 19, by Patrick Weir (Weir), administrator, during a telephone call, threaten LPN Cathy Todd (Todd) with revocation of her nursing license?

(j) About December 20, by Weir, in a posted writing, tell employee that the Union was to blame for their not getting a wage increase?

(2) Was Golden a supervisor within the meaning of Section 2(11) of the Act?

(3) If not, was she suspended on October 28 and discharged on November 20 because the Respondent believed that she engaged in union activities; or because of her performance as UM and because she violated the labor consultants' instructions not to talk to employees about their union activities?

[1] All dates hereinafter occurred in 2019 unless otherwise indicated.

(4) If so, was she discharged because she refused to commit unfair labor practices; or because of her performance as UM?

(5) Was Endy a statutory supervisor within the meaning of Section 2(11) of the Act?

(6) If not, did the Respondent suspend and discharge him on November 11 because he engaged in union activities, erroneously concluding he was not an employee covered by the Act; or because of his conduct on November 11?

(7) Did the Respondent suspend Todd, on November 13 and discharge her on November 19 because she engaged in union activities; or because she engaged in misconduct toward patients and made medication errors?

At trial, I granted the motion of the Acting General Counsel (hereinafter the General Counsel) to withdraw paragraph 6(a) of the complaint.

## Witnesses and Credibility

The General Counsel called Endy, Golden, and Todd, and former employee Leonard.

The Respondent called the following witnesses:

(1) Peraino
(2) Weir
(3) Robin Boice (Boice), assistant director of nursing (ADON)
(4) Heather Britton-Schrager (Britton-Schrager), social worker
(5) Carolyn Carchidi (Carchidi), director of nursing (DON)
(6) Julie Cole (Cole), director of medical records and legal liaison
(7) Josie Cruz (Cruz), CSS supervisor
(8) Marcos DeAbreu (DeAbreu), CSS director
(9) Sheranique Lewinson (Lewinson), certified nursing assistant (CNA)
(10) Cindy Pope (Pope), LPN coordinator and former UM.

I will address credibility section-by-section, applying several well-establish judicial precepts. The first is that our system of jurisprudence has what is called the "missing witness rule" that gives a judge discretion to draw an adverse inference based on a party's failure to call a witness who may reasonably be assumed to be favorably disposed to the party and who could reasonably be expected to corroborate its version of events, particularly when the witness is the party's agent and thus within its authority or control. *Natural Life, Inc. d/b/a Heart & Weight Institute,* 366 NLRB No. 53 (2018), slip op. at 1 fn. 1, citing *Electrical Workers IBEW Local 3 (Teknion, Inc.),* 329 NLRB 337, 337 fn. 1 (1999); see also *Reno Hilton,* 326 NLRB 1421, 1421 fn. 1 (1998), enfd. 196 F.3d 1275 (D.C. Cir. 1999). In that event, it is appropriate to draw an adverse inference regarding any factual question on which the witness is likely to have knowledge. *International Automated Machines*, 285 NLRB 1122, 1123 (1987), enfd. mem. 861 F.2d 720 (6th Cir. 1988); see also *Interstate Circuit v. U.S.*, 306 U.S. 208, 225–226 (1939).

The Respondent did not call its admitted agents Camerota, Carhart, or Walters, and advanced no reasons why they could not be present. I therefore draw an adverse inference from their failure to testify. On the other hand, I will not draw such an inference from the Respondent's not calling former DON Kathy McCormick (McCormick) because a former manager or supervisor is generally not considered to be under a party's control. See *Natural Life, Inc.*, above; *Levingston Shipbuilding Co.*, 249 NLRB 1, 19 (1980); see also *Apex Linen Service, Inc*., 366 NLRB No. 12, slip. op at 1 fn. 1 (2018).

Secondly, a witness may be found partially credible because the mere fact that the witness is discredited on one point does not automatically mean he or she must be entirely discredited. *Golden Hours Convalescent Hospitals*, 182 NLRB 796, 799 (1970). Rather, a witness' testimony is appropriately weighed with the evidence as a whole and evaluated for plausibility. Id. at 798–799; see also *MEMC Electronic Materials, Inc.*, 342 NLRB 1172, 1183 fn. 13 (2004); *Excel Container*, 325 NLRB 17, 17 fn. 1 (1997). As Chief Judge Learned Hand stated in *NLRB v. Universal Camera Corp.*, 179 F.2d 749, 754 (2d Cir. 1950), regarding witness testimony, "[N]othing is more common in all kinds of judicial decisions than to believe some and not all."

Finally, when credibility resolution is not based on observations of witnesses' testimonial demeanor, the choice between conflicting testimonies rests on the weight of the evidence, established or admitted facts, inherent probabilities, and reasonable inferences drawn from the record as a whole. *Taylor Motors, Inc.*, 366 NLRB No. 69 slip op. at 1 fn. 3 (2018); *Lignotock Corp.*, 298 NLRB 209, 209 fn. 1 (1990).

## Facts

Based on the entire record, including testimony and my observations of witness demeanor, documents, written and oral stipulations, and the thoughtful posttrial briefs that all parties filed, I find the following.

## The Respondent's Operation

At all material times, the Respondent has been a corporation with an office and place of business in Lake Katrine, New York (the facility), providing long term rehabilitation and brain injury care. The Respondent admits jurisdiction as alleged in the complaint, and I so find.

The Respondent is owned by USG, whose chief operating officer (Camerota) has authority over Weir, the facility's administrator and highest-ranking official. The facility is considered a nursing home with a special population of residents or patients (neighbors) who are assigned to units according to the medical assessment of their needs and functions. The Company employs a total of about 415 employees. R. Exh. 59 is an organizational chart showing the departments in the brain injury program: CSS, dietary, nursing, rehabilitation, and therapeutic services.

A DON and two ADONs head the nursing department, which manages eight units and has a total of 175–200 employees. The next level consists of a nursing supervisor and eight UMs or

nurse managers, who are registered nurses (RNs). The nursing supervisors and UMs oversee staff RNs, LPNs, certified nursing assistants (CNAs), and CNA assistants.

The CSS department is responsible for checking and caring for neighbors' behaviors, protecting safety, and signing neighbors out and in. There are around 46 employees in the department. Under the director, there are two CSS supervisors for each of the three shifts,[2] working 5 days a week, with every other weekend off. CSS duties include one-on-one close visual observations (CVOs) and 15-minute checks on neighbors in the neurobehavioral intensive stabilization and rehabilitation program unit (NBI), where patients with the most severe brain injuries require the most ongoing attention.

## Union Organizing Efforts

Union organizing efforts at the facility began in June. Thereafter, union representatives met with employees on numerous occasions at various locations, including Angela's Pizza, an ice cream parlor across the street, outside the building during shift changes, and off the road leading to the facility.

The Union filed a petition on October 28, the withdrawal of which the Regional Director approved on October 30 (Jt. Exhs. 1, 2). Also, on October 30, the Respondent filed an RM petition (Jt. Exh. 3). I take administrative notice that the Regional Director dismissed this petition and that the Board denied the Respondent's petition for review on February 5, 2020. 2020 WL 1182437.

## The Company's Response

### A. Meetings

By July 5, management was aware that employees were talking about unions due to the staffing crisis. See GC Exh. 8 at 3, an email from Weir to Seth Rinn (Rinn), USG regional manager. In subsequent emails in July, Camerota and Weir discussed ways to improve employee morale by having more communication with staff and addressing their concerns "in order to get ahead of the union talk." (ibid at 1–2).

USG retained the services of Peraino of CSAV360, a management consulting company (the consultants), whose team first arrived at the facility on July 29. See GC Exh. 9. For about 8 days, they met with managers in the administrative conference room[3] to train them on what they lawfully could and could not do under the NLRA. They also held nonmandatory meetings with employees starting in late August or early September and going into October.

In late October, following the filing of the RC petition, the consultants returned to the facility on a consistent basis for about 4 weeks. Peraino came regularly from Monday

[2] 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. (first shift); 3 to 11 p.m. (second shift); and 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. (third shift).

[3] All meetings hereinafter took place there unless otherwise indicated.

through Thursday. The consultants conducted daily morning and afternoon meetings with Weir, directors from the brain injury program, and UMs.

At morning meetings, the consultants reiterated the do's and don'ts under the Act. They distributed a "fact of the day," a quote from the NLRB.gov website, which they asked management to hand out to employees. They also went around the room and asked managers if they had questions and to tell them what was going on, what the issues were, and how the Company should be messaging employees.

In a November 11 email to Weir regarding the management meeting that morning (GC Exh. 11), Peraino stated as one of the items to be addressed:

> [A]ny statements fro[sic] managers that the 1199 is still here such as "1199 said everything was frozen" or "no one can get fired" or "they are approaching employees in the cafeteria" or the had a meeting over the weekend" – of these statements and actions are being done and we need the details for the lawyer on Tuesday morning by noon.

I will later address Golden's testimony about what the consultants asked her and other managers to do since that is interwoven with the circumstances of her suspension and discharge.

At afternoon meetings, the consultants asked the managers to give feedback on how employees had responded to the handouts—thrown them away without reading them and shown or not shown an interest—in order to get an idea of their reactions. The managers were asked their impressions regarding employees' perspectives on the Union. Weir equivocated when asked on cross-examination by Golden's attorney whether managers were specifically asked for the names of individuals they thought appeared prounion, but he did testify that he and Peraino had conversations about which employees appeared to be pro- or antiunion. The consultants also met one-on-one with managers concerning their communications with employees.

In addition, the consultants held meetings with employees, designed not to mix employees with a "soft support" for the Union with those with "hard-core support," based on their managers' assessments and the employee's body language (Peraino at Tr. 832). See GC Exh. 12, an October 31 email from Peraino to Weir, which impeached Weir's testimony that he was never told to send employees considered soft in their union support to meetings.

On November 17, Peraino emailed Weir, copying Camerota (U. Exh. 14), with the subject, "Job descriptions and rates of pay." One topic was prounion people leaving the building through a side door where the lock was broken and no one swiped to enter or exit. He stated, "They walk off the property yo[sic] meet with the union. On Saturday they went to talk to the now terminated CSS supervisor Josh. It was Carlington, his girlfriend, Kelly Leonard, Alex and 1 more unidentified person." He recommended that the Company install a lock on the side door so employees would have to punch out when they left the property. This document contradicted Peraino's testimony that the lock was needed because one employee in

particular was coming back into the building on his off shift to deal marijuana.

B. Managers' Interactions with Employees

According to Peraino, in order to evaluate management, the consultants walked around the building, engaged in physical observation and talked to employees to ascertain their issues and concerns. They discovered problems in leadership, in particular distrust of DON McCormick and the ineffectiveness of the director of human resources (HR), both of whom were fired on October 31. The consultants recommended that management be more visible to employees and develop rapport with them. As a result, Weir implemented a program whereby department heads would come in on their off time, on different shifts and times, and walk through the building, get to know employees, offer them assistance, and find out their concerns.

Weir testified that he personally followed these steps, the staff sometimes asked for linens or towels, and he got them. There is no evidence he had ever done this before. Golden testified that she came in on her off time to talk to employees. Additionally, she distributed the literature and spoke to employees about it. She personally observed department directors, UMs, and administrative business employees on NBI, where she was the UM. She explained that because the neighbors in that unit are more easily agitated, stimuli are kept low, and the policy is that only persons assigned to the unit should be there.

LPN Leonard worked for the Respondent for 12 years prior to her voluntary resignation in January 2020. She testified consistently, credibly, and in detail, and her testimony was not necessarily inconsistent with the above testimony of Peraino and Weir. I therefore credit her and find as follows.

From late October until she quit, department heads stood by the time clock on a daily basis when she arrived to punch in for her 3 p.m. shift. They engaged in no conversation. During this same period, two or three department heads or UMs came each night between nine and ten and either just walked through the unit or asked if the staff needed anything. She considered the department heads' presence as "really odd" because they normally worked dayshift and could not help her with patient care, including medications and treatments (Tr. 128). Among them were department heads of maintenance (Walters), housekeeping (Steve Winters (Winters)), dietary services, and respiratory services. They did not typically come onto the unit in their normal course of duties, and Leonard could recall no prior occasions when any department heads or UMs from other units came and offered to help with her work.

Leonard further testified about an incident on the afternoon of November 12, when she was called to a meeting with Peraino and three other consultants, DON Carchidi, ADON Cole, Walters, Winters, and HR representative Andrew Bennett.

Neither Bennett nor Walters were called as witnesses, and I have already stated why an adverse inference Is appropriate. Furthermore, Carchidi and Cole did not testify about this incident. To the extent they were not questioned about the event to which Leonard testified, I draw an adverse inference. See *Daikichi Corp.*, 335 NLRB 622, 622 (2001); *Colorflow*

*Decorator Products*, 228 NLRB 408, 410 (1977), enfd. mem. 583 F.2d 1288 (5th Cir. 1978). Thus, only Kelly and Peraino testified about the meeting, and I credit Kelly's account, as follows, over Peraino's less plausible version.

Leonard sat in the middle during the meeting, which lasted 30–45 minutes. Peraino asked if she knew why she was there. She replied no, and he said that they knew who she was. He pulled out her employee badge picture and stated that they had four statements of her harassing the housekeepers about union activity, as well as her on video.[4] Leonard denied it, saying that she did not even know the housekeepers. Winters stated that four of his staff members had come to him and said they felt threatened by Leonard, who was forcing the Union on them. Leonard denied this. Walters then said that they had her on video. Kelly asked Peraino to see the footage and the statements, but he replied that she was not going to see anything. Peraino accused her of being a despicable nurse for harassing people about union activity. He stated that she could participate in union activity but not on corporate time and that the Union could not protect her nursing license. She asked if he was threatening her license, and he replied no, he was just letting her know. I note that the Respondent at trial produced neither statements nor a video; the video was encompassed by the General Counsel's subpoena, but the Respondent's counsel represented that no such video could be found.

Peraino testified that when he told Kelly a neighbor had complained about her saying the facility was short-staffed, jeopardizing patient care, she responded, "So what. I can do that if I want to." (Tr. 821). He also testified that after he told her this caused patients anxiety, she responded they had a right to know. I highly doubt that Kelly would have had the temerity to so respond when she was being verbally attacked before a group of managers and consultants that included the head of nursing.

## Tara Golden

### A. Employment

Golden was an RN charge nurse from October 2014 until her promotion to UM of NBI in August 2018. See R. Exh. 31. As UM, Golden worked four 10-hour shifts and was salaried at $33.50 an hour.

NBI, a 20-bed lockdown unit for residents who require behavior interventions, is the only unit for which state law requires a specific policy. The policy (R. Exh. 30) states that NBI serves "individuals whose severe behavior cannot be managed in a less restrictive setting" and "who are a danger to themselves or others and who display violent or aggressive behaviors. . . ."

The policy provides that the NBI management team includes a nurse UM, who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the unit and program to assure compliance with

[4] Peraino testified that the housekeeping department is contracted out and its employees not employed by the Company.

state regulations. All staff assigned to the unit report directly or indirectly to the UM, who has authority to direct them. The UM reports to the DON.

R. Exh. 24 is the UM job description. The area of supervision is described as responsibility for "supervision of total care of neighbors on the unit. Schedules RNs, LPNs and CNAs to adequately cover the unit." The job summary includes providing "supervision, management, support and leadership for nursing personnel. . . ."

Testifying about the role and duties of UMs in 2019 were Golden; Carchidi, who was ADON and then DON in 2019;[5] and Boice, who was a UM for about 7-1/2 years prior to her promotion to ADON in August 2020. I give Boice's testimony the most weight. She has had by far the most experience as a UM at the facility and testified credibly. Golden was new to the position and may not have been fully aware of the extent of her authority, but her testimony about her responsibilities was truncated, leading me to believe that she was reluctant to fully detail them; and Carchidi was not a consistently reliable witness.

None of them testified that UMs had any role in hiring, scheduling (a function of the scheduler or the DON), transferring, granting overtime or time off, or approving sick leave.

The role of UM in 2019 was to oversee the entire unit: the nursing staff; employees from the CSS, activities or recreation, and program specialist departments who came to the unit; and neighbors. Duties included receiving reports from the prior shift and touching base with the incoming staff to ensure that their assignments were correct; making rounds on the unit to ensure that neighbors were safe and the staff was performing; checking the paperwork of LPNs to make certain that they were properly administering and documenting medication; and overseeing any "code rainbows," called when a neighbor exhibited violence or agitation. The recreation department supervisor had an office on NBI. The supervisors for the other departments visited the unit every day on every shift but maintained no constant presence.

The Respondent treated Golden as a manager/supervisor. Aside from the consultants' meetings, she attended various managements meetings, including the daily 8:30 a.m. meetings Weir held with all department heads, as well as special meetings he called. See R. Exh. 25, emails announcing such meetings; see also R. Exhs. 26, 27, management notifications Golden received from Weir.

Prior to February, Golden made recommendations for new safety measures in NBI, which the Company later implemented (R. Exhs. 32, 37, 38). By a May 15 email, she advised department heads that, due to safety concerns, neighbors would not be allowed scheduled phone calls when only two CSS workers were on the unit (R. Exh. 35). Golden emailed managers on July 10, reminding them that their staffs should fill out the break sheet for lunch and 15-minutes breaks and not use their cell phones on the unit, as per company policy (R. Exh. 34). In a November 7 email to staff, Golden directed that a returning RN, who was transferred out of NBI for inappropriate behavior, should not be allowed in the NBI or have contact with its neighbors (R. Exh. 41). However, Golden testified without

[5] She became acting DON when McCormick was fired on October 31, and later became DON.

contradiction that she issued the email at Carchidi's direction.

Progressive discipline is practiced although not contained in the employee handbook (R. Exh. 23). As reflected in disciplinary reports of record (e.g., R. Exh. 18), the levels are re-education, verbal warning, written warning, suspension, and termination.

Golden's testimony on her authority to issue disciplines was confusing. She testified that if she had an issue with a nursing employee, she went to the nursing supervisor and that she never issued any counselings or oral or written reprimands on her own but did so only at the direction of directors or supervisors or HR. However, she also testified that she used a template for write-ups, presented them to employees to read, and then handed them to HR. She testified that she played no role in disciplining employees from other departments who came on NBI but conceded that if she had problems with them, she had discussions with their supervisors.

Boice testified that in 2019 she had the authority to issue write-ups to nursing staff and to write up CSS or activities staff, have them sign them, and then notify their directors. The Respondent submitted no documentation to corroborate her or to rebut Golden's assertion that she never did, but U. Exh. 3 contains disciplinary reports issued to LPNs for derelictions regarding the administration of medication. The job titles of the supervisors who issued them are not stated, although at least some of them were apparently UMs—then UM Pope signed one on March 8 (at 17). Boice further testified that if she wanted to skip a step in the disciplinary process, she consulted with the DON and HR.

The extent of Golden's authority to issue or effectively recommend discipline is complicated by the fact that, according to Carchidi, DON McCormick had to approve a UM's issuance of discipline or suspension and that Carchidi announced a change in this policy in the first week of November when she assumed the role. Golden was discharged on November 20, only about 2 weeks later. However, it is noteworthy that Carchidi gave this testimony in connection with Todd's suspension and discharge, ostensibly to show that McCormick had treated Todd with "kid gloves" and refused to act on recommendations she be disciplined. For reasons to be stated, I do not credit that testimony.

Golden testified that she performed evaluations of RNs and CNAs as directed by HR, although she did not sign any of the eight performance reviews by UMs in 2019 contained in R. Exh. 28. UM Pope prepared Todd's last performance review, issued on June 5 (R. Exh. 57).

Golden received no disciplines for her performance as UM of NBI.

B. Golden's Conduct at Consultants' Meetings

Golden's testimony about the sequence of events at these meetings was confusing, and her descriptions of what was said were not fully consistent. On the other hand, she testified with assurance and in considerable detail on many conversations, leading me to believe that she did not fabricate them. Any flaws in her testimony paled in comparison to the issues I

have with the Respondent's witnesses, as explained below. I once more note the Respondent failed to call Camerota or Carhart. The following is Golden's credited testimony unless otherwise indicated.

C. Events of October 28–31

At the regular management morning report on October 28, Weir stated that USMG would be coming in and were angry that the Union had filed something. At about 10 a.m., Golden was called back to a meeting with Camerota and three other consultants, and department heads, UMs, and office personnel (about 20 persons total). The meeting lasted about 1-1/2 –1-3/4 hours. Camerota stated that the corporation was prepared to fire all 46 CSS workers because the Company had heard that they were the ones bringing in the Union. He blamed management for the staff 's unhappiness and asked each person in the room to state who they were, where they worked, and what they had heard about employees being unhappy or for the Union.

Golden was called back in the early afternoon for an individual meeting with Peraino and Camerota and the other consultants. Camerota accused Golden of sending out a mass text message to CSS workers (during the earlier meeting), informing them that they all might be terminated because of union activity. She denied it. Peraino said that if he were her, he would try everything to find out who put her name in the text message. Golden repeated that she had not sent a text message to anyone. Camerota slammed his hand down on the table and stated that she had to prove to him she was not working with the Union. She asked how, and denied involvement with the Union. The meeting lasted 30–45 minutes.

At about 5:15 p.m. on October 28, Golden was called to a meeting in Weir's office, with Weir, McCormick, and Carhart. Weir stated that she was suspended pending an investigation of her unionizing and sending out the text message to the CSS. She asked if this was legal and asked for something in writing. Weir answered that it was legal and she did not need anything in writing.

Weir testified Golden was suspended because, at the meeting earlier that day, "[S]he once again, after having been told repeatedly that we could not do those kind of things, identifying staff . . . who were part of the Union or not part of the Union . . . she did it again . . . . and was once again saying, well, I talked to this person and they are not part of[sic] Union, and that kind of behavior." (Tr. 385). However, Peraino and Carchidi gave the date Golden first engaged in such conduct as occurring after she returned from suspension, and Cole did not testify about Golden ever doing this.

On October 30, McCormick called Golden and informed her that she was not losing her job and to come in the following morning to meet with Weir. Weir testified that he brought Golden back because on further investigation, no managers reported they had actually heard Golden question staff, but the Respondent provided no corroborating evidence of any further investigation. Golden was paid for the time she was on suspension.

Golden met with Weir in his office on October 31. On cross-examination, Weir

asserted that he could not recall making several statements, but the General Counsel refreshed his memory by showing him his Board affidavit and playing a tape recording of their conversation Golden had made, Based on Golden's testimony and Weir's refreshed memory, I find the following.

Weir told Golden that he was glad she was back, she had potential, and she was trying to become a better supervisor. He stated that he was worried she would have been so angry she would have quit. He further said that her name came up with regard to text messages sent to CSS during the management meeting. He told her that the consultants were professionals and did this for a living, and even though he and Carhart did not think there was anything there, she had to be suspended pending an investigation. He also told her that she was an integral part of the facility, the NBI staff was saying good things about her, and she was doing a really good job.

D. Golden's Postsuspension Conduct

After Golden's return, the first consultants' meeting that she attended was on the morning of November 4. Both Camerota and Peraino spoke. Camerota discussed what the Union could and could not do. He mentioned management rights and said that he could hold up raises for a up to a year while a contract was being signed. He gave out literature that managers were supposed to ["audio interference" at this point in the transcript] staff about. Management was to send only staff whom they thought were not for the Union to the administrative conference room to watch a PowerPoint presentation. Camerota and/or Peraino requested that staff come in on their off shifts and monitor the staff or ask them if they needed any assistance:

> But you didn't have to give any assistance. You were just looking for any suspicious activities. You were looking to see if anybody was gathering in groups. We were looking to see if – when we walked by, if they stopped speaking or if they continued speaking. We were looking to see if any [audio interference] that were not job related. And they asked us to hand out literature and talk with the staff about the literature. (Tr. 61–62).

Further, Peraino or Camerota said that union meetings were being held in Angela's Pizza. and it was not illegal for managers to go public places such as restaurants and see if people were organizing or having meetings, overhear what they were saying, and report back what they heard. Managers were given times union activity might be happening and good times to come in and ask staff if they needed help, while observing if they gathered in groups or engaged in nonjob-related activities.

On November 4, after the conclusion of the afternoon management meeting, Golden was called to Weir's office. Camerota, Weir, Carchidi, and Carhart attended. Camerota stated that Golden was special because he did not bring people back from suspension, but through Weir's advocacy, he had looked deeper and found out she was a green or new manager and had not been properly oriented.

Camerota said that she was either a greater actress, a great liar, or clueless, because the people she had said were not for the Union, he had as for the Union. Comorata went on to say that she was no longer allowed to state whether or not employees were for the Union but to report body language, eye contact while she was talking with them, whether they crumpled up the consultants' literature, and if they spoke to anyone after she spoke with them about the literature. I note here that Golden did not testify about an earlier occasion when she had stated at a meeting that certain people were for the Union, leading me to believe that her recollection of the sequence of events was confused.

At a meeting later the week of November 4, Camerota asked if she had anything to report. She mentioned employee "S.N."[6] and what happened when she spoke to him about the literature (body language, etc.). Camerota responded that was how to report.

The week of November 11, Golden stayed after an afternoon consultants' meeting ended. In the presence of the consultants, Cole, and several other UMs, she stated that the staff was afraid to come inside the building and talk, and LPN "N." (Golden did not know her last name) felt it was a witch hunt and people were being bullied.

Peraino suggested that employee N. was for the Union. Golden replied that was ridiculous; just because people were not for corporate at the time did not mean they were prounion, and N. was just expressing her feelings and opinion. Cole responded that the Company was holding people accountable for their actions and now that was bullying. Golden replied that people who did not need to be on the units were going there and talking to staff about the Union. The meeting lasted about 30–40 minutes.

Also the week of November 11, likely immediately after the meeting just described (Golden could not recall the actual day), Golden was very upset and was pulled aside by Carhart and Carchidi. They went to Weir's office and met for about 45 minutes. Carhart asked what Golden had to say. According to Golden, she "exploded and said, "[T]his was a witch hunt and it was ridiculous, and that people that they had for the Union were not for the Union. And that . . . there was hostility in the building." (Tr. 75). Carhart told her not to use the words witch hunt because that was not what the Company was doing; rather, they were trying to figure out who was for the Union and who was not. Carhart stated that Golden was seen handing out union cards. Golden asked where, when, and to whom, and said she had never seen a union card or had contact with the Union. Carhart asked how Golden could prove that she was not in with the Union, and Golden replied she did not know but would be unwilling to come in on her off time to monitor the staff or go to other units to monitor staff on her on time.

Carchidi testified that after she became DON, she and Carhart were at a meeting at which Golden seemed upset (apparently the above meeting). They pulled her aside and accompanied her to Weir's office, where they allowed her to vent about the unit and the staff and the difficulty she was having transitioning to management and still being friends with the floor nurses with whom she had worked. Carhart spoke to her about how to be a manager.

[6] I will use initials for employees in the interest of protecting their privacy.

I credit Golden's version of the meeting over Carchidi's: (1) Golden's version was considerably more detailed; (2) it is far more plausible that after the consultants' meeting, the subject of the union would have been the focus, not Golden's work-related issues; and (3) the Respondent did not call Carhart to corroborate Carchidi's account or deny the statements that Golden attributed to her.

### E. Respondent's Witnesses' Conflicting Accounts of Golden's Conduct at Meetings

Peraino testified that Golden attended many do's and don'ts sessions and that he had concerns about her "many times." (Tr. 823). However, he testified about only two specific incidents. The first was the week the Union withdrew its petition (on October 30), probably the same day. At the morning meeting, when the consultants went around the room and got feedback from managers, Golden was saying how employees would have voted, in contravention of the consultants' directive. She mentioned a specific employee by name and said that he was antiunion. Peraino asked how she knew, and she replied that she had asked him. Peraino responded that managers had been repeatedly told that asking employees those kind of questions was prohibited as unlawful interrogation.

The second time was the following week, when Golden brought a notebook to a morning meeting. She showed Peraino page-by-page five or six employees and concerns they had expressed to her. Peraino asked if she had solicited their concerns, and she replied yes. He responded that he did not know how many times he could tell her she could not ask employees what was happening, why they were upset, or how they felt. I note this testimony directly contradicts what the consultants had instructed managers to do and that, even according to Peraino, Golden did not say anything on this occasion about questioning employees about their union sympathies.

Peraino testified that after that meeting, he recommended Golden not attend any more management meetings because he thought that she was looking to undermine the Company by purposely drawing an unfair labor practice. He also testified that she attended no further meetings—contrary to Weir's testimony that she attended the afternoon meeting on November 20.

On cross-examination, Peraino testified that there were two additional occasions when Golden came to a meeting with the same kind of list regarding employee grievances, but he provided no specifics.

Weir testified that Golden "on multiple occasions" would start saying she talked to this person who was not union and talked to this person who was, contrary to the directions of the consultants (Tr. 384). He further testified that at the November 20 afternoon meeting, Golden listed the names of people who were not union and stated that she did not understand why management thought they were union. None of the Respondent's other witnesses corroborated this testimony.

Carchidi and Cole contradicted Peraino's and Weir's assertion that Golden repeatedly violated the consultants' instructions by identifying specific employees and their sentiments toward the Union.

Carchidi recalled only two incidents involving Golden. The first was in about early October, when Golden stated at a morning meeting that this person was for the Union, this person was not, and this person might be. Peraino told Golden that she could not question staff about their union deals and/or activities. The second occurred after October 31, when Golden brought a paper to a morning meeting and said that she had spoken to employees, and these were the reasons they were talking about getting a union, such as pay and benefits.

Director Cole testified about only one incident, "maybe in October," when Golden entered the room "quite aggressively," waved a notebook or piece of paper and very loudly announced, "[T]his is why they want a union." (Tr. 881). I find it highly implausible that Golden would have burst into a room filled with management and consultants in such a manner.

Thus, the Respondent's witnesses offered hopelessly irreconcilable accounts of Golden's conduct at the management meetings, and I do not believe Peraino's and Weir's testimony that Golden was so blatant in repeatedly continuing to flout instructions.

## F. Golden's Discharge

On the afternoon of November 20, Golden was called to Weir's office, where she met with Weir and Carchidi. Weir stated that Golden was no longer "a good fit," did not seem to be able to make the transition into a management role, and was being relieved from her post. Golden asked what she had done wrong and what she could work on from a managerial standpoint. He repeated that it was just not a good fit, the Company was going in a different direction, and she was no longer employed. I credit Weir that Golden expressed shock at her termination.

Weir testified that prior to July, he observed that Golden was "struggling" as a UM and that she regularly came to his office to seek guidance (Tr. 376). He also testified that he received "a lot" of complaints from staff regarding how she was managing the unit (ibid). However, he related only two specific complaints, from two program specialists, both in connection with Golden's issuance of R. Exh. 41. The Respondent did not call them as witnesses or produce any documents showing any such complaints. Golden was never disciplined for anything she did as a UM.

Weir went on to testify that he did a lot of monitoring and coaching of Golden but saw little improvement in her performance. Respondent's Exh. 39 is an August 16 email from Golden to managers, with Weir and McCormick copied, in which she discussed the problems she was having as a nurse manager and asked for suggestions to alleviate employee burnout. Weir testified that after receiving her email, he arranged for her to attend a front-line supervisor/manager training course offered by an outside vendor on September 25. See R. Exh. 40. He testified that her performance as a manager did not improve after she attended

the training or after she returned from suspension.

According to Weir, Golden's termination was also based on what Golden stated at consultants' meetings, especially the November 20 afternoon meeting. Thus, after that meeting, Weir and Peraino reached out to Camerota and expressed "the concern" with Golden. Weir told Camerota that he was "okay [with terminating Golden] because she just wasn't learning how to transition into a management role." (Tr. 390). Implicit in this testimony is that Peraino recommended the termination and that the primary reason was what Golden said at the meetings, not her performance. I note Weir's suspicious vagueness in testifying about a "communication" he had with Peraino and either Rinn or Camerota concerning the termination.

Carchidi recalled a conversation in her office with Golden sometime between August and October. Golden was upset and explained to Carchidi that she felt as though her visions for the NBI unit were not being realized. About a month or month-and-a-half later, they had another conversation, in which Golden expressed frustration about finding her style as a manager. Despite being the DON, Carchidi had no involvement in the decision to terminate Golden.

Golden received nothing in writing concerning her termination, which Weir testified was due to an inadvertent HR error. Weir placed a notice of termination in her record, stating that the reason was her inability to transition to her management role and her creating conflict between staff and management (R. Exh. 42).

Weir said nothing to Golden about her termination being due to her improperly providing the names of employees who were pro- or antiunion. However, he testified "there was a frustration that she continued to do the same things that she had been educated not to do; not learning how to be a manager and to take those kind of directions regarding what we are able and could be . . . doing." (Tr. 485–486). The record reflects no conduct to which he could have been referring other than in connection with the consultants' directives.

In May 2020, an RN supervisor who had engaged in misconduct toward a neighbor was suspended for a week and then demoted to staff nurse. See GC Exh. 16. Carchidi testified that a few months prior to the hearing, a UM was suspended, written up, and demoted to unit nurse because, at a morning report meeting, she engaged in a "verbal explosion and cursing and everything and slammed out of there. Then she went over into the café, where she continued." (Tr. 731). Carchidi explained that she was not terminated because her outbursts occurred in nonpatient areas.

## Cathy Todd

### A. Employment

The Respondent employed Todd as an LPN from 2007 until her discharge on November 19. She was the sole LPN on the 3–11 p.m. shift in the NRP4 unit, a 40-bed unit averaging 35–40 neighbors.

As an LPN, Todd gave out medications and performed treatments as ordered, and dealt with behaviors. NRP4 was for more independent neighbors, who were ready to go back into the community, and the staff wanted them to come to the nurses' station to get their medications so that they would learn the times they needed to take them.

The facility's policy regarding self-administration of medication is designed to enable neighbors to be at "their highest level of independence." (R. Exh. 10). Pursuant to policy (R. Exh. 11), medications are normally given at 5 and 9 p.m., with an hour leeway before or after the appointed time, unless physicians have ordered otherwise. Neighbors need to ask an LPN or CNA to use the phone, which is kept in a locked area.

UM Pope prepared Todd's last performance review, issued on June 5 (R. Exh. 57). Todd was rated in 27 categories—unsatisfactory, needs improvement, meets expectations, exceeds expectations, or exceptional—and received an overall rating of 82. Pope did not rate her unsatisfactory in any of them. She checked improvement needed in three: individual attitude, department/unit/shift attitude, and day-to-day supervision of others. On the other hand, Pope rated Todd as exceptional in five categories and exceeds expectations in two.

In the comments section, Pope cited Todd's taking things personally and not letting things go as weaknesses. She also noted complaints that Todd had regarding CNAs and undocumented patient behaviors. Nothing is said in the evaluation about Todd mistreating neighbors. Under strengths, Pope stated "organized, dependable, reliable."

Todd testified that prior to November, she was never suspended, and she recalled no prior disciplines. The Respondent produced no evidence to show that she ever received any prior discipline, and I find this as a fact.

B. Union Activity

Todd was engaged in union activity from the start of the organizational campaign in June until her discharge. She talked to coworkers; attended meetings at different places, including Angela's Pizza and the ice cream parlor across the street from the facility; and handed out flyers and authorization cards on the road leading to the facility at shift changes. Leonard testified that in June, Todd approached her and asked if she was interested in joining the Union.

About a week after the first union meeting, Todd was in the dining room during dinner when UM Katrina Collenton approached her and stated that she had heard there was a meeting about the union and Todd was there. Todd responded yes, and Collenton asked why. Todd answered that she wanted to know if they could help.

Soon afterward, in approximately July, Todd had a conversation with her UM, Pope, in NRP4. Pope asked her why she supported or was interested in the Union. Todd replied that the employees needed help in getting raises and better health insurance. Pope responded that the health insurance would never change and there would be no pay raise. Todd replied

that was why employees needed the Union. Pope professed not to recall any conversation with Todd about the Union, and other aspects of her testimony were not believable. I therefore credit Todd's account.

Todd testified that she had several conversations with Carchidi. She specifically recalled a lengthy one a few days after McCormick was fired on October 31. When Carchidi had stopped by the unit, they discussed McCormick's termination, and Carchidi stated that the Union was to blame. Todd disagreed. They also discussed why Todd had gotten involved with the Union.

On direct examination, Carchidi testified to one conversation about the Union with Todd, occurring on NRP4 when Carchidi was ADON. Todd stated that she was going to educate herself about the Union, and Carchidi replied education was always a good thing. On cross-examination, Carchidi repeated that they had only that one conversation. After being shown her Board affidavit, Carchidi still professed not to remember others, and the General Counsel then read the following paragraph into the record (Tr. 721):

> LPN Cathy Todd talked to me about the Union . . . when I was the ADON a few times when I was supervising at night. . . . I believe they were in about the late summer. . . . IMs. Todd told me she had gone to a Union meeting, because she wanted to find out what it was about, that she wanted to be educated. On one occasion, she mentioned a struggle with her health insurance. . . . Once she mentioned something to me about LPNs feeling targeted by supervisors.

Carchidi was evasive, and contrary to the Respondent (R. Br. at 31), I find that she was impeached by her affidavit. I therefore credit Todd's credible testimony over hers.

Weir admittedly knew at the time of Todd's termination that she was a union supporter.

### C. Events Leading to Todd's Suspension and Discharge

In the course of meeting with individual managers, Peraino concluded that one of the biggest problems was DON McCormick's favoritism. Thus, Peraino testified, McCormick had a list entitled "untouchables," naming eight employees who apparently could never be written up. He further testified that McCormack admitted there was a list of her favorites, "and her people can come and go as they please." (Tr. 804). No such list was put in evidence, and I find Peraino's testimony highly implausible. If McCormick did in fact engage in favoritism toward certain employees, I can think of no reason why she would have needed to put it in writing, and I seriously doubt that she would have so crassly admitted to such conduct. I therefore discredit this testimony.

Carchidi testified that after she took over as acting DON on October 31, she discovered McCormick had not acted on about 10–15 written disciplines supervisors had submitted to her, including complaints against Todd. Carchidi issued no disciplines as a result.

Pope testified that she had concerns over the past couple of years with Todd's "attitude and abrasiveness in the way she spoke" to some of the neighbors (Tr. 506). See R. Exh. 8 at 1, dated March 5, 2018, her notes of complaints from one neighbor about Todd. The Respondent's records show nothing about Pope ever acting on any such concerns.

Pope further testified that in October, she overheard Todd yell at a neighbor, and prepared a write up. She met with Todd, in the presence of Social Worker Britton-Schrager, to present it. However, Britton-Schrager offered no testimony about such a meeting, and Todd did not recall it. Pope averred that when she met with Todd, she was not able to issue her the write-up because Todd adamantly denied the allegation, slammed things, and stormed out. Pope took no further steps to issue the write-up, which later mysteriously disappeared from her office. I cannot believe that had Todd engaged in such egregious conduct, she would not have been further disciplined for insubordination. I would also expect that Britton-Schrager would have recalled such a dramatic meeting had it occurred. I therefore discredit this testimony.

Britton-Schrager did testify that in February 2019, she observed a neighbor was very upset and asked her why. The neighbor replied that Todd had embarrassed her in front of other neighbors, and Britton-Schrager prepared a progress note relating what the neighbor said (R. Exh. 8 at 3, dated February 14). It does not mention Todd by name. In late October, a neighbor reported to Britton-Schrager that Todd had refused to give her medication in her room because Todd said she was able to walk to the nurse's station. Britton-Schrager typed up a statement from the neighbor (ibid at 2, dated October 30). No disciplinary action was taken against Todd as a result of these incidents.

The circumstances of when and how CNA Lewinson came to prepare R. Exh. 1, an undated statement reciting her complaints about Todd's treatment of neighbors, are murky because the Respondent's witnesses were confusing on its genesis and vague on details.

Lewinson first testified that "between October and November," she observed Todd's "foul behavior" toward neighbors and reported it to Pope, who asked her to write down everything, and she did so (Tr. 493–494). However, on cross-examination, she testified that "one day," Pope brought up Todd's name—she could not remember how—and Lewinson made "a gesture." (Tr. 495). Pope asked what was going on, Lewinson described Todd's behavior. Pope, on the other hand, testified "[s]omething had happened at the nurse's station, and this CNA [Lewinson] was there. And it was something that was said by Cathy." (Tr. 512).

In any event, Lewinson prepared R. Exh. 1 at Pope's request. When it came to Weir's attention, he immediately started an investigation by asking Carchidi and Cole to interview two of the neighbors whom Lewinson identified.

Carchidi and Cole talked to several residents and decided that further investigation of Todd was needed. See R. Exh. 2, Carchidi's November 12 notes of interviews with several neighbors. Residents raised issues related to Todd's providing food, providing medications, and general treatment.

Cole testified that following these interviews, she reported to Weir that what the patients had reported was abuse under state Department of Health (DOH) regulations and that Todd therefore should be suspended immediately. See R. Exh. 12, the DOH incident reporting manual, which she referenced in her testimony. She expressed her opinion that Todd should be terminated immediately for engaging in "a very high level of abuse. . . . It's horrible." (Tr. 875).

D. Todd's Suspension

On the afternoon of November 13, Todd returned a voice mail message from Carchidi. Either Weir or Carchidi stated that Todd was being suspended pending further investigation for the way she treated patients, including the way she spoke to them about the way they ate, removed food from a neighbor's tray or withheld food, embarrassed them before other neighbors, and talked on her cell phone but denied a patient a phone call during medication pass. Todd denied the accusations. She responded that UM had a rule that neighbors could not use the phone during medication pass because it was distracting. Both Weir and Carchidi testified that Todd declined his offer to come in and write a statement, but Carchidi's one-paragraph summary of the call (R. Exh. 3) says nothing about this.

E. Further Investigation

According to the Carchidi, after the suspension, she and Pope spoke with various staff, including CNAs Lewinson and Kristina Plonski (Plonski), who worked with Todd. They concluded that there were issues with Todd's giving medications and her withholding of food. See R. Exh. 4, Pope's November 13 statement regarding (1) her interviews with Lewinson ("last week")[7] and Plonski (that same day), (2) patient complaints from two neighbors regarding denial of medications and phone calls, and (3) Pope's own observations. See also R. Exh. 5, Carchidi's November 13 notes of her conversation with Plonski.

Pope prepared another statement on November 14, on the results of her interviewing neighbors regarding whether Todd was administering medications in the appropriate time frame (R. Exh. 7).

On November 13, social workers interviewed neighbors, about Todd's conduct. Britton-Schrager reported to Carchidi that several complained about their medication and general treatment, with food being a big issue.

The social workers next interviewed neighbors using standardized forms. R. Exh. 6 consists of the interviews of 37 neighbors. At least 34 interviews were conducted on November 13 (one form is undated), and two on November 14. One question was "Have staff ever yelled or been rude?" Six of the 37 responded yes:

(1) Kathy [Todd] a few times (p. 1).

[7] This was before Todd's suspension, contrary to Carchidi's testimony.

(2) A CSS person with reddish hair. In the margin in a different handwriting, is a negative comment about Todd (p. 3).

(3) A nurse (p. 9).

(4) "Cindy Pope treats me like individual asshole." (p. 29).

(5) Judy ("I've complained about it [cut off]."") (p. 31).

(6) Katie [may or may not have been Todd] (p. 33).

Other negative comments were (1) Todd would not let him/her use phone (p. 6); (2) Pope switched roommates without consulting people (p. 12); (3) Pope showed favoritism (p. 30); and (4) when a male nurse entered the room, he says "What a fuckin' mess." (p. 67).

Carchidi did not follow up in any way on the complaints against staff members other than Todd, or discipline them.

What is peculiar is that Todd was suspended pending further investigation on the afternoon of November 13, yet Pope's recitation of patient complaints, her own observations, and her interview with Plonski are also dated November 13. Similarly, almost all off the social workers interviews with patients were dated November 13. I must conclude that the "further investigation" was already initiated and at least substantially completed **before** Todd's suspension. I further note Weir's testimony that he became aware of Todd's supposed medication errors only after her suspension and therefore never confronted her with them. If such was the case, one has to ask what purpose the "further investigation" served.

F. Discharge

Based on all of the above described incident, Weir and Carchidi decided to terminate Todd because the investigation revealed that she had a "long history" of mistreating neighbors in various ways (Weir at Tr. 324). On November 19, Carchidi, with Weir present, called Todd and asked her to come in that afternoon. She met with them in Weir's office.

Todd became very emotional on direct examination when the questions turned to her discharge, requiring a brief break before she regained her composure. I therefore reject the statement in Weir's summary of events (R. Exh. 14 at 2) that when he informed Todd of her termination, "[S]he did not appear surprised or upset."

It is undisputed that Weir told Todd she was being terminated because of what he had learned from the investigation regarding multiple complaints, whether he mentioned only complaints from coworkers (Todd) or complaints from both coworkers and neighbors (Weir). Todd denied any misconduct. I believe that Todd became emotional at the termination interview and might not have accurately heard everything Weir said. I therefore credit Weir and Carchidi and find that Weir stated that Todd's treatment of patients could rise to the level

of being reportable to the DOH, as opposed to Todd's testimony that Weir stated he would be reporting her to the nursing board.

Weir never reported Todd to any state licensing authority. However, Cole, the director of medical records and legal liaison, testified that the administrator or DON is required by state law to report suspected abuse to the DOH, and Weir confirmed he had such a responsibility. Weir testified he did not do so because Todd was terminated and could no longer harm residents of the facility.

Todd later received an undated termination letter stating that her employment ended on November 19 (Jt. Exh. 5). It set out no reasons for the termination. Weir's entry in Todd's personnel file states "[i]nappropriate behavior" to residents (R. Exh. 13), and his summary of the investigations of Todd lists incidents of alleged patient abuse (R. Exh.14). Neither mentions medication errors.

U. Exh. 3 contains 14 disciplines issued to LPNs, ranging in date from June 3, 2016 to December 17, 2020, most for derelictions in administering medications. Two were re-educations, nine were verbal warnings, two were written warnings, and one did not specify the level of discipline. An LPN was terminated on November 11, 2020 for physical and verbal abuse of a patient (R. Exh. 15).

**Josh Endy**

A. Employment

The Respondent employed Endy from September 2014, until his discharge on November 11. In May 2017, he was promoted from shift CSS worker to a CSS supervisor and received a pay raise from $11.27 to $13.50 per hour (R. Exh. 19).

On the night shift in 2019, Endy and Cruz were the two CSS supervisors. The only other supervisor at the facility was the nursing supervisor, who was the highest ranking official on site. DeAbreu was available to come in if Endy or Cruz needed his assistance. When both Endy and Cruz were on shift, they considered her the lead supervisor, although she was not formally designated as such. Because they worked alone on weekends, Endy was the only CSS supervisor on duty at least two shifts a week.

The job description for a CSS supervisor (R. Exh. 17), includes such functions as addressing coverage concerns on all posts and shifts, assigning shift CSS to unit tasks, monitoring their performance during code rainbows or therapeutic interventions, covering their assignments when necessary, assisting in scheduling adjustments and attendance, and in-service, disciplinary reports.

Endy, Cruz, and DeAbreu all testified about the position of CSS supervisor on the night shift. Much of their testimony was substantially consistent. DeAbreu was often vague in his answers and failed to address specific situations. Cruz has been CSS supervisor since about 2014 and on the night shift since about 2015. She thus has the most direct familiarity with the role, had no incentive to either overstate or understate the scope of Endy's

responsibilities, and appeared candid. I therefore give her testimony particular weight.

The CSS supervisors played no role in hiring, evaluating, or transferring employees from shift-to-shift; or in granting promotions, vacation requests, bonuses, or wage increases.

DeAbreu made out a weekly schedule of which employees would be working each night. Cruz and Endy had no authority to make any modifications to the schedule. They had the responsibility to assign staff to particular posts at the beginning of each shift. See R. Exh. 44, assignment and break sheets Endy filled out in 2019. Endy's estimate of how long this took him struck me as unreasonably low. I credit Cruz that it took approximately 10–15 minutes to fill out the assignment sheet if everyone showed up on time and no one called out, otherwise 30 minutes; and that bringing the sheet to the nursing supervisor to review took another 15 minutes or so.

The forms listed five assignments or posts in NBI (including CVOs and 15-minute checks), eight assignments in other units, and one front desk position. Depending on neighbors' needs, not all the posts were filled each night. Usually, there were seven to ten CSS staff, including Endy and Cruz, on the shift. Both Endy and Cruz regularly assigned themselves or each other to perform assignments that CSS staff also performed. Endy frequently filled out the assignment and break sheets at the start of the shift and paperwork at the end of the shift because Cruz would come in late or leave early, or otherwise ask him to do so. If neither supervisor was working on the shift, the nursing supervisor or a CSS employee with seniority made the assignments. See GC Exh. 7, assignment and break sheets CSS employee Anita Rogers signed in September and October. If needed, DeAbreu came into the facility to perform this function.

During the shift, the CSS supervisor notated breaks and any changes in assignments. At times, the nursing supervisor informed them a CSS employee was needed for an extra CVO, requiring them to adjust assignments depending on who was available. At the end of the shift, either Cruz or Endy filled out shift-to-shift forms for the incoming shift's supervisors. See R. Exh. 45, forms that Endy filled out in 2019. They listed any codes that were called, any changes in patient status, and any staffing issues—calls outs, lateness, or disciplinary actions. They also submitted supervisor's daily shift reports. See R. Exh. 58, reports from 2019 that Endy signed.

Endy testified that none of the CSS positions required special training or education, and Cruz stated that all of the CSS staff were capable of working in NBI, the most demanding unit. Endy placed CSS workers in posts that they requested or where he felt they were comfortable or good. He explained that certain CSS workers developed bonds with certain neighbors, most of whom were long-term for a period of years. On the other hand, some staff did not get along with certain neighbors. Moreover, some newer workers and female workers were uncomfortable in the NBI unit because of the nature of its neighbors, so Endy assigned experienced employees or those who wanted to work there.

Cruz testified that she uses similar criteria in making assignments. She tries to rotate assignments, some of which are more physically demanding or are with particularly difficult

neighbors, unless an employee wants a particular post. She sometimes has to assign employees to positions that they do not want and has had occasion to reassign CSS staff to different positions because they were not up to performing certain work. She considers the behavior of a neighbor in deciding whether a staff member of the same gender should be assigned to the neighbor's CVO.

Nothing in the record suggests that the assignments staff received had any impact on their pay or other terms or conditions of their employment.

In 2019, Endy or Cruz were short staffed on a regular basis, including every weekend. They determined when the shift was short staffed and could then ask a CSS worker on the previous shift to stay over (and receive overtime pay) but only a voluntary basis. They knew from DeAbreu which employees had worked too much and should not be asked but could decide which other employees to ask. If DeAbreu was going to be away, he told them that they could fill out and approve an authorization for an employee to stay over. See R. Exh. 55, authorizations Endy signed in August. He filled out a total of 10–20 overtime authorizations during his tenure as a CSS supervisor. Cruz testified that she could approve on her own an employee staying over, and Endy could recall no occasions when DeAbreu disapproved his approval of such.

Endy testified that DeAbreu told him and Cruz to write up employees who had a certain number of tardies and turn the forms in to DeAbreu, who would deal with them. He further testified that on one occasion, he reported to DeAbreu that a CSS employee had been caught sleeping but did not make a recommendation. He and DeAbreu met with the employee to deliver the discipline. In several shift-to-shift forms (R. Exh. 45), Endy wrote in "write-ups" in the discipline box, but it is unclear to what they referred, and their ultimate disposition. In this regard, Endy did not know of any instances where DeAbreu acted on recommendations that he made for write-ups. Endy testified that he signed R. Exh. 52, an April 2018 disciplinary report for a no call/no show but filled it out at DeAbreu's direction.

Cruz testified that she has also written up employees for no call outs, lateness, and sleeping on the job but needed DeAbreu's approval of those write-ups. Because her testimony on how often he has disagreed with her recommendations was unclear, I cannot make a finding thereon. She first stated "he does tend sometimes to disagree" but then said he disagreed with her "maybe about" 25 percent of the time (Tr. 779–780). In those situations, she immediately notified DeAbreu. They discussed the incident, together met with the employee to get his or her side, and then decided the extent of discipline to be imposed. There is no evidence DeAbreu ever engaged in further investigation of the incidents that Endy or Cruz brought to his attention.

R. Exh. 18 is comprised of illustrative disciplinary reports that CSS supervisors on other shifts wrote between December 28, 2018 through December 19. DeAbreu's involvement in their issuance is unclear. Cruz's testimony indicated the disciplinary reports are retained by CSS even when discipline is not actually imposed so whether DeAbreu actually followed through with discipline in those cases is unknown.

R. Exh. 48 is DeAbreu's October 30 performance review of Endy. It is difficult to read, but DeAbreu apparently referred to Endy's decision-making as a weakness. However, Endy's only unsatisfactory rating was in appearance/attitude, and he was never disciplined for failures of the CSS employees on his shift. Cruz testified that DeAbreu has verbally counseled her on how to better handle CSS staff situations, such as their clocking in and out for their 15-minute breaks or their properly completing paperwork, but there is no evidence that these counselings were reduced to writing or that Cruz suffered any actual or potential consequences as a result.

Endy testified that he did not attend any supervisors' meetings, and he did not recognize R. Exh. 47, an email inviting him to attend a CSS supervisors meeting on January 3 and his response. DeAbreu further testified that he held a meeting with the CSS supervisors in October or November but could not recall the date. Even fully crediting DeAbreu, any CSS supervisors meetings were rare. Neither Endy nor Cruz were invited to attend the consultants' meetings.

The Respondent produced no records to show that Endy received any disciplines prior to November 11, and I find that he received none.

B. Union Activity

Endy was involved in union activity from August or September until after his discharge. He handed out authorization cards and collected them; talked to employees in favor of the Union; and attended gatherings at Angela's Pizza, during shift changes, and on the side road.

C. Suspension and Discharge

On the morning of November 11, Peraino exchanged a series of emails with Camerota and Rinn (GC Exh. 15). In the first, with the subject "Josh in CSS3," Peraino wrote, "He is a supervisor. Wearing a t shirt to working[sic] and listening on headphones to his cell phone while working. . . . you can terminate asap. He is not part of the union at all. . . . "

Rinn responded, "He has been the topic of many conversations lately. I'll talk to Patrick." [Weir].

Peraino sent a second email, stating, "He is blatantly anti company[sic] and breaking every policy. Not a supervisor."

Camerota replied, "If he is not following our philosophy, please feel free to relieve him of his duties today."

Peraino offered no testimony regarding these emails and, as previously stated, the Respondent did not call Camerota as a witness. On their face, these emails show that the Company had made the decision to discharge Endy prior to the meeting Peraino and DeAbreu held with him on the evening of November 11. They undercut DeAbreu's testimony that he

made the decision to discharge Endy because of his aggressive actions, insubordination, and disrespectful manner during the meeting itself.

Peraino testified that he had previously received complaints from a CNA and a CSS worker that Endy was coercing them into signing union authorization cards; the CNA further complained that Endy did not follow the dress code but insisted CSS workers did. Neither of these employees testified, and the record contains nothing in writing from them. Peraino further testified that he asked DeAbreu to schedule a meeting with Endy because Endy had solicited union authorization cars and could not do that as a supervisor.

Endy, DeAbreu, and Peraino all gave accounts of their November 11 meeting. I credit Endy's version of what was said for the following reasons:

(1) The above emails earlier that day.

(2) Endy's account was quite detailed, and I do not believe he fabricated it.

(3) DeAbreu testified that he relieved Endy of his duties when Endy threw his badge on the table; however, Peraino testified that nothing was said at the meeting about Endy being suspended or discharged.

(4) Both DeAbreu and Peraino testified that after Peraino told Endy he could not engage in union activity as a supervisor, Endy became "aggressive" and stated, "I don't need this fucking job" (Tr. 634, 815), before he threw his badge at them, and stormed out of the room, slamming the door and damaging the wall.

Weir testified that DeAbreu and Peraino related to him this alleged statement, which is included in Weir's summary of the incident (R. Exh. 49) but inexplicably appears nowhere in the statement DeAbreu prepared at Weir's request regarding the meeting (R. Exh. 20). Such statement, if Endy made it, would have been highly relevant to any assertion that Endy engaged in inappropriate behavior.

In contrast, I find more plausible Endy's testimony that Peraino used obscenity, as described below. I note that Endy's description of Peraino's attitude during the meeting comported with Kelly's depiction of his bullying tone during her November 11 meeting with him.

(5) I further find implausible DeAbreu's testimony that after Peraino stated that Endy could not pass out cards because he was a supervisor, Endy replied, "Keith, who[sic] you think you are to tell me that?" (Tr. 633). Nothing in the record suggests that Peraino and Endy were on a first-name basis, and I have a problem believing that a first-line supervisor would have been so crass in his response.

(6) Finally, Peraino testified that after Endy slammed the door on his way out, he told Endy that between throwing the badge and slamming the door (hard enough to cause damage), this was workplace violence. Conceptually, I cannot see how Peraino could have

told Endy this after he left the room.

Based on the above, I find as follows. At the start of the meeting, Peraino asked Endy if he knew why he was there, to which Endy replied no. Peraino stated that it was his union activity, his handing out union authorization cards was illegal, and the corporation was going to sue him. Peraino asked him something, but when he started to answer, Peraino said to "shut the fuck up," he did not want to hear it. (Tr. 205). During the meeting, Peraino asked why Endy wanted a union and if he liked his job. Endy responded that he was trying to make it better and safer. Peraino stated that if he did not like his job the way it was, why didn't he "fucking" leave? (Tr. 208). Endy responded, "[B]ecause I need my job. I have a family to support." (ibid). Peraino continued asking questions, including if Endy knew who else was handing out cards. Endy replied that he would not answer. Peraino asked DeAbreu if this (Endy) was whom he really wanted to be the supervisor on the overnight shift. Peraino next asked DeAbreu what was going to happen, and DeAbreu replied suspension pending investigation.

Endy testified that he "slid" his badge across the table and that the door was hydraulic and "barely" hit the wall as he left (Tr. 208). However, Endy conceded that he was upset, which would have been understandable under the circumstances, in particular Peraino's tone, and I think that he understated his conduct. On the other hand, I believe that Peraino and DeAbreu exaggerated what Endy did. The most likely scenario is that he threw his badge on the table and not at them and then forcefully threw open the door on his way out, causing a small dent in the wall. See R. Exhs. 21, 22, photographs taken the following day. DeAbreu escorted him out of the building.

Peraino and DeAbreu separately called Weir that evening and related what had occurred at the meeting. Weir directed DeAbreu to write a statement, which DeAbreu did (R. Exh. 20.) Weir later wrote up a summary of the meeting based on what Peraino and DeAbreu told him (R. Exh. 49, which is undated).

No further investigation was conducted, and Endy was mailed a notice of termination dated November 27, effective November 11 (Jt. Exh. 4). It set out no reasons. In a November 25 email to Peraino and Weir, Rinn stated that Endy's throwing his badge and walking out was viewed as his resignation (GC. Exh. 13).

**Posted Letter About Wage Increases**

The Company has had a history of granting employees annual across-the-board wage increases with the exception of 1 year when it was delayed a few months. They were apparently given at the end of the year, and many staff members came to Weir inquiring whether they would get one at the end of 2019.

On December 19, the Respondent posted on the bulletin board a letter addressed to all staff (Jt. Exh. 6; GC Exhs. 2, 3). The subject was "wage increases," and it began, "Over the past few weeks, many employees have approached us about wage increases." The letter went on to state that the Union had filed unfair labor practice charges, described them, and

concluded, as a result, "[E]verything is frozen. . . . [W]e are in a stalled mode." The letter continued to be posted at least into early January 2020.

## Analysis and Conclusions

### 8(a)(1) Conduct

(1) Surveillance

Although the General Counsel does not specifically allege surveillance, it is closely related to the subject matter of the complaint (impression of surveillance) and has been fully and fairly litigated. I can therefore consider it as the basis for finding an unfair labor practice. See, e.g., *Securitas Security Services USA*, 369 NLRB No. 57, slip op. at 1 (2020); *Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.*, 368 NLRB No. 146, slip op. at 1 fn. 3 (2019); *Pergament United States, Inc.*, 296 NLRB 333, 334 (1989), enfd. 920 F.2d 130 (2d Cir. 1990).

The test of whether an employer has unlawfully created the impression of surveillance is an objective one, i.e., whether under all the circumstances an employee could reasonably conclude from the statement or conduct in question that his/her protected activities were placed under surveillance. *Bridgestone Firestone South Carolina*, 350 NLRB 526, 527, (2007), quoting *Flexsteel Industries*, 311 NLRB 257, 257 (1993); see also *Consolidated Communications of Texas Co.*, 366 NLRB No. 172, slip op. at 1 fn. 1 (2018).

A. The Respondent does not dispute:

(1) The consultants directed managers to walk around the building, engage in physical observation, and talk to employees to know their issues and concerns and report those back in the afternoon meetings.

(2) The consultants asked managers to provide feedback on how employees responded to the management handouts, and their impressions regarding employees' perspectives on the Union. Peraino and Weir had conversations about which employees appeared to be pro- or antiunion.

(3) The consultants held meetings with individual employees categorized as having "soft" or "hard" support for the Union, based on managers' assessments and the employee's body language.

Very significantly, GC Exh. 11 shows that managers were instructed to report back what they heard the Union was telling employees and whether the Union was approaching employees in the cafeteria or had a meeting over the weekend. The only way managers would have been able to learn this conduct would have been by questioning employees or surveilling them.

(4) Management, including Weir, department heads, and UMs came in on their off time and walked through the facility, visiting various units, talking to employees about their concerns, and offering to assist them in their work. Employees must have been quite surprised to see Weir, the facility's highest-ranking official, show up at their work areas and

offer to help them with manual tasks when there is no evidence that he had ever previously done so.

B. Leonard's Testimony

Prior to late October 2019, no department heads or UMs had ever come to Leonard's unit, aside from the unit's UM, and offered to help with work. Moreover, on a daily basis, department heads stood by the time clock when Leonard arrived at punch in. On November 12, Peraino told Leonard that they had four statements of her harassing the housekeepers about union activity, and Director Walters stated that they had her on video.

C. Golden's Testimony

At the November 4 meeting, Peraino requested managers come in on their off shifts and monitor the staff or ask if they needed any assistance, to look for any "suspicious activities," including whether employees were gathering in groups, stopped speaking when managers walked by, or were engaged in nonjob-related activities. Peraino or Camerota also brought up union meetings at Angela's Pizza and suggested that managers go there, overhear what employees were saying, and report back what they heard. After the November 4 meeting, Camerota told Golden that, in future meetings, she should report back employees' body language, eye contact while she talked to them, whether they crumpled up the consultants' literature, and if they spoke to other employees after she gave them the literature. The week of November 11, Carhart told Golden that the Company was trying to figure out who was for the Union and who was not.

D. Conclusions

Based on above, I conclude that from on about November 4, the Respondent engaged in unlawful surveillance and gave the impression of surveillance in violation of Section 8(a)(1). Further, because the supervisors carried out the instructions to commit unlawful surveillance, the Respondent further violated Section 8(a)(1) by issuing those instructions. See *Resistance Technology, Inc.*, 280 NLRB 1004, 1011 fn. 5 (1986); see also *Blankenship & Associates*, 290 NLRB 557, 557 fn. 3 (1988).

I dismiss paragraph 6(d) as it relates to instructing supervisors and agents to interrogate employees about their support for the Union. Even according to Golden, the thrust of the consultants' directives was to ascertain employees' union sympathies on the basis of observations, not by direct interrogation, and her testimony on their instructions regarding direct questioning of employees was confusing.

(2) Threats Regarding Nursing Licenses

Threatening an employee with loss of his or her nursing license for engaging in protected activity violates Section 8(a)(1). *Loyalhanna Health Care Associates*, 352 NLRB 863 (2007); *Indian Hills Care Center*, 321 NLRB 144 (1996).

At the November 12 meeting, above, Peraino told Leonard that the Union could not protect her nursing license. Peraino first stated that Leonard could participate in union activity but not on corporate time, and the housekeeping department might have been operated by a contractor. Nevertheless, I need not address the law on solicitation/distribution on worktime because I find highly suspicious the Respondent's refusal to provide the alleged statements and video to Leonard (and its failure to produce them at trial). I draw the inference that the purpose of Peraino's statement was to discourage Leonard from engaging in legitimate union activity and that she reasonably could have construed it as an implied threat that the Respondent would retaliate against her for engaging in protected union activity not limited to the housekeeping department. I therefore find this a violation.

Weir told Todd at their November 19 meeting that her treatment of patients could rise to the level of being reportable to the DOH. This was an indirect threat that her nursing license could be jeopardized. However, Weir said nothing, expressly or impliedly, tying in his statement with any union activity on Todd's part; rather, it related to alleged malfeasance. The statement was therefore not coercive, and I dismiss this allegation.

(3) Freeze on Wage Increases

The respondent had a history of granting employees across-the-board wage increases. The December 19 posting stated that as a result of the Union's filing of unfair labor practice charges, everything was frozen. It is long settled that an employer may not blame a union for causing a wage freeze. *J. & G. Wall Baking Co.*, 272 NLRB 1008, 1012 (1984). I therefore conclude that the posting violated Section 8(a)(1).

(4) Other Alleged Violations of Section 8(a)(1)

Whether certain statements made to Golden and Endy could constitute violations depends on whether they were supervisors within the meaning of Section 8(a)(1), or employees

**Todd's Suspension and Discharge**

In cases where the issue is the motive behind an employer's action against an employee (was it legitimate or based on animus on account of the employee's union or protected concerted activities?), the appropriate analysis is provided by *Wright Line*, 251 NLRB 1083 (1980), enfd. 662 F.2d 899 (1st Cir. 1981), cert. denied 455 U.S. 989 (1982); see *Mondelez Global, LLC*, 369 NLRB No. 46, slip op. at 1 (2020); *Auto Nations, Inc.*, 360 NLRB 1298, 1301 (2014), enfd. 801 F.3d 767 (7th Cir. 2015).

Under *Wright Line,* the General Counsel bears the initial burden of establishing that an employee's union or other protected concerted activity was a motivating factor in the employer's adverse employment action. *Wright Line*, above at 1089. The General Counsel can meet this burden by establishing (1) union or other protected activity by the employee, (2) employer knowledge of that activity, and (3) antiunion animus, or animus against protected activity, on the employer's part. See, e.g., *Consolidated Bus Transit*, 350 NLRB 1064, 1065 (2007), enfd. 577 F.3d 467 (2d Cir. 2009).

In *Tschiggfrie Properties, Ltd.*, 368 NLRB No. 120, slip op. at 5–8 (2019), the Board

clarified the animus element of this test, explaining that the General Counsel "does not *invariably* sustain his burden of proof under *Wright Line* whenever, in addition to protected activity and knowledge thereof, the record contains *any* evidence of the employer's animus or hostility toward union or other protected activity." Id., slip op. at 7 (emphasis in original). "Instead, the evidence must be sufficient to establish that a causal relationship exists between the employee's protected activity and the employer's adverse action against the employee." Id., slip op. at 8.

Once the General Counsel makes out a prima facie case, the burden shifts to the respondent to show that the same action would have taken place even in the absence of the protected activity. *Wright Line*, above at 1089; *Manno Electric, Inc.*, 321 NLRB 278, 280 fn. 12 (1996). To establish this affirmative defense, an employer cannot simply present a legitimate reason for its action but must persuade by a preponderance of the evidence that the same action would have taken place even in the absence of the protected activity. *East End Bus Lines, Inc.*, 366 NLRB No. 180, slip op. at 1 (2018); *Consolidated Bus Transit*, 350 NLRB 1064, 1066 (2007). Where the General Counsel has made a strong showing of discriminatory motivation, the employer's defense burden is substantial. *Bally's Park Place, Inc.*, 355 NLRB 1319, 1321 (2010), enfd. 646 F.3d 929 (D.C. Cir. 2011); *East End Bus Lines*, ibid.

Here, Todd talked to coworkers, attended union meetings at various locations, and handed out union flyers and authorization cards from June until her discharge in November. Weir, DON Carchidi, and UMs Collenton and Pope knew of her union activities and support.

As recognized in *Electrolux Home Products*, 368 NLRB No. 34, slip op. at 1 (2019), "The Board may infer from the pretextual nature of an employer's proffered justification that the employer acted out of union **animus**, 'at least where . . . the surrounding facts tend to reinforce that inference." (quoting *Shattuck Denn Mining Corp. v. NLRB,* 362 F.2d 466, 470 (9th Cir. 1966) (emphasis in *Electrolux*).

Todd was an LPN for the Respondent for approximately 12 years prior to her discharge. In Todd's last performance review—on June 5, approximately 5 months before she was suspended and discharged—Pope rated her as "exceptional" in five categories; "needs improvement" in three, none related to misconduct toward neighbors or improper administration of medications; and "unsatisfactory" in none. Pope said nothing negative whatsoever about Todd's interactions with residents or her administering medications.

I simply cannot imagine that the Respondent would have kept Todd employed for 12 years had her conduct been as egregious as the Respondent has now claimed. She had no prior disciplines, and it is inconceivable that her performance so drastically deteriorated between June 5 and November 13 that she became properly subject to discharge.

Thus, the timing of Todd's suspension and discharge, after 12 years as an employee and within several months of her union activity, infers animus against her for that activity. See, e.g. *Mondelez Global LLC*, 369 NLRB No. 46, slip op. at 2 (2020) (proximity of a "few months"); *Velox Express, Inc.*, 368 NLRB No. 61, slip op. at 10–11, 29 (2019). With further regard to timing, the Respondent's allegedly sudden discovery of serious medication errors on her part only after she was suspended on November 13 seems far too coincidental when there

is no evidence that she was ever disciplined for such in the previous 12 years. I note that Todd was never afforded an opportunity to respond to these allegations and that medication errors are nowhere mentioned in the Weir's termination summary.

Moreover, the Respondent's disparate treatment of Todd also raises the inference of animus toward her. See, e.g., *Mondelez-Global*, above at 4; *La Gloria Oil & Gas Co.* 337 NLRB 1120, 1124 (2002), affd. 71 Fed. App. 441 (5th Cir. 2003); *Southwire v. NLRB*, 820 F.2d 453, 460 (D.C. Cir. 1987) (absence of evidence employer discharged any other employee for similar violation). Here, no other staff members against whom neighbors complained in the social worker interviews were disciplined, and the Respondent has never discharged an LPN for derelictions in administering medication, giving them only verbal warnings in the vast majority of cases.

The above evidence supports an inference that misconduct toward neighbors and/or medication errors were not the real reasons Todd was suspended and discharged. See, e.g., *Mondelez Global,* above at 2.

Therefore, the General Counsel has established a prima facie case. I further conclude from the above evidence that the Respondent has failed to rebut this prima facie case. It is noteworthy that Legal Liaison Cole testified that she considered Todd's alleged abuse of patients "horrible" and that state law required either Weir or Carchidi to report to the DOH any suspected patient abuse. Weir conceded that if conduct rose to the level of abuse, he was required to report it to DOH. Yet, no report was made. I must believe that management realized that any conduct on Todd's part was not serious enough to report—undermining the Respondent's defense. The alternative is that they knowingly violated state law. In this regard, Weir explained that he did not report Todd because she was terminated and posed no further risk to the Respondent's residents (thus failing to alert the DOH that she posed a risk of committing further patient abuse at other facilities). I highly doubt that the DOH would accept this rationale.

In sum, the Respondent initiated complaints against Todd from staff and neighbors and then conducted a sham investigation with the preconceived goal of finding faults with her performance to justify her discharge.

Accordingly, I conclude that the Respondent's suspension and discharge of Todd violated Section 8(a)(3) and (1) of the Act.

**Supervisory Status of Golden and Endy**

A. Legal Framework

Section 2(11) defines "supervisor" as any individual having the authority, in the interest of the employer, to hire, transfer, suspend, lay off, recall, promote, discharge, assign, reward, or discipline other employees, or responsibly to direct them, or to adjust their grievances, or effectively to recommend such action, if in connection with the foregoing the exercise of such authority is not of a merely routine or clerical nature, but requires the use of independent judgment.

The types of supervisory authority are listed in the disjunctive, and authority with

regard to any one suffices to confer supervisory authority. *NLRB v. Kentucky River Community Care*, 532 U.S. 706, 713 (2001); *Queen Mary*, 317 NLRB 1303, 1303 (1995), enfd. sub nom. *NLRB v. RMS Foundation, Inc.*, 113 F.3d 1242 (9th Cir. 1997); *NLRB v. Quinnipac College*, 256 F.3d 68, 74 (2001). Possession of supervisory authority is enough even if not exercised. *Fred Meyer Alaska, Inc.*, 334 NLRB 646, 649 fn. 8 (2001); *Mid Allegheny Corp.*, 233 NLRB 1463, 1464 (1977).

To be classified a supervisor, an individual must use independent judgement in such a way as to affect employees' terms and conditions of employment. *Oakwood Healthcare*, 348 NLRB 686, 688 (2006); *Children's Farm Home,* 324 NLRB 61 (1997). "Independent judgement" will not be found where a result "is dictated or controlled by detailed instructions . . . ." *Oakwood Healthcare*, ibid; see also *Busco Tug and Barge, Inc.*, 359 NLRB 486, 490 (2012). Likewise, "independent judgement" does not include recommendations to a decision maker who conducts independent investigations of the events and fails to follow the recommendations. *Children's Farm Home,* 324 NLRB 61 (1997). Authority exercised on a rare, isolated, and irregular basis will not confer supervisory status. *Offshore Shipbuilding*, 274 NLRB 539, 555 (1985).

In *Kentucky River*, above at 711–712, the Court upheld the Board's rule that the burden of establishing supervisory status lies with the party asserting it. The party must establish such status by a preponderance of the evidence. *Dean & Deluca New York, Inc.*, 338 NLRB 1046, 1047 (2002); *Bethany Medical Center*, 328 NLRB 1094, 1103 (1999).

The "Board has exercised caution 'not to construe supervisory status too broadly because the employee who is deemed a supervisor is denied rights which the Act is intended to protect." *Oakwood Healthcare, Inc.*, above at 688. Thus, the Act protects "straw bosses, lead men, and set up men" even though they perform "minor supervisory duties." Ibid, quoting *NLRB v. Bell Aerospace Co.*, 416 U.S. 267, 280–281(1974); see also *General Security Services Corp.*, 326 NLRB 312, 312 (1998).

Statutory status is not proven where the record evidence "is in conflict or otherwise inconclusive." *Republican Co.*, 361 NLRB 93, 97 (2014), citing *Phelps Community Medical Center*, 295 NLRB 486, 490 (1989); *Golden Crest Healthcare Center*, 348 NLRB 727,731 (2006).

Absent evidence that an individual possesses any one of the statutory indicia, the Board looks to secondary indicia to determine supervisory status; however, secondary indicia are insufficient by themselves to establish supervisory authority. *Veolia Transportation Services, Inc.*, 363 NLRB 1879, 1879 (2016); *Sam's Club*, 349 NLRB 1007, 1014 (2007); *Ken-Crest Services*, 335 NLRB 777, 779 (2001).

B. Golden

As the UM or nursing manager of the locked NBI unit, Golden was responsible for overseeing the nursing staff to ensure that neighbors received the intensive medical attention and care their severe brain injuries required. She also oversaw employees from other departments who came to the unit to service the neighbors. There is no evidence that the

DON, ADONs, or nursing supervisor regularly came onto the unit or ever engaged in direct supervision of any of its staff members. With the exception of one department head or supervisor, who had an office in NBI, none of the other department directors maintained any degree of continuous presence there but rather visited only sporadically. Thus, Golden effectively oversaw their employees the entire work period and had the sole responsibility for detecting problems in their employees' performance and bringing them to the department heads. In sum, the nature of her position inherently required her to use her ongoing judgment in directing staff, both nursing and those from other departments.

In this regard, Golden had the authority as UM to issue written disciplines to the nursing staff, up to the written warning level, even if she never exercised that authority. As the Board has stated, "'[s]tatutory supervisory authority is not lost simply because it is infrequently exercised . . . . '" *Matheson Fast Freight*, 297 NLRB 63, 71 (1989), quoting *Jack Holland & Son,* 237 NLRB 263, 265 (1978); see also *Pepsi-Cola Co.*, 327 NLRB 1062, 1063 (1999); *Kern Council Services*, 259 NLRB 817, 818 (1981).

The authority to discipline is a separate indicia from the authority to responsibly direct, but they are interrelated when, as here, Golden was the sole nursing supervisor on the unit for the entire shift. There is no evidence the DON, ADONs, or nursing supervisor ever initiated disciplines of the nursing staff, nor did any supervisors report to Golden. Accordingly, she was the only person on the unit charged with the responsibility of discipling employees for shortcomings in their performance. Therefore, that authority to discipline must necessarily have been based on her authority to manage or direct them.

If Golden lacked the authority to responsibly direct employee, then no supervisor maintained an ongoing presence and authority over staff who worked in NBI—a locked unit having patients in the greatest need of continuous medical and other care, and the only unit for which state law requires a specific policy because it is a specialized program for residents requiring behavior interventions. It is unthinkable that no supervisor would have been physically present on the unit and in charge of how employees carried out their duties. Cf. *Matheson Fast Freight*, 297 NLRB 63, 72 (1989) (responsible direction found when supervisor was solely in charge of an operation that involved important safety measures requiring the extensive exercise of independent judgement).

Accordingly, I find that Golden possessed at least two indicia of supervisory authority: to responsibly direct and to discipline employees.

As secondary indicia, I also consider Golden's job title and job description, her higher pay, her attendance at management meetings, the Respondent's holding her out as a supervisor, her evaluating employees, and the high employee-to-supervisor ratio if UMs are not supervisors. See *Veolia Transportation Services,* above at 12; *Sheraton Hotel*, 350 NLRB 1114, 1118 (2007); *Sam's Club,* above at 1014; *Volair Contactors, Inc.*, 341 NLRB 673, 673 fn. 8 (2004); *Williamette Industries, Inc.*, 336 NLRB 743, 743 (2001); *Juniper Industries*, 311 NLRB 109, 110 (1993); *Riverchase Health Care Center*, 304 NLRB 861, 865 (1991).

Based on the above, I conclude that Golden was a statutory supervisor and agent of the Respondent within the meaning of Section 2(11) of the Act.

Since I have concluded that Golden was a statutory supervisor, any statements Camerota made to her on October 28 and Carhart made to her on about November 18 were not made to an employee within the meaning of the Act. I therefore dismiss these allegations.

C. Endy

Endy played no role in hiring; deciding which employees would be scheduled to work a shift; transferring employees from shift to shift; preparing evaluations; or granting promotions, vacation requests, bonuses or wage increases. The indicia that must be evaluated relate to assignment, direction, and discipline.

(1) Assignment of Work

The analysis here is whether Endy's role in assignment was of a routine or clerical nature or required the use of independent judgment. To exercise "independent judgment" in making assignments and directing employees, an individual must act or effectively recommend action "free of the control of others," using a degree of discretion rising above "the merely routine or clerical." *Oakwood Healthcare, Inc.*, above at 692–693; see also *Brusco Tug and Barge, Inc.*, 359 NLRB 486, 490 (2012). Determining what rises to the level of 2(11) authority can be difficult. As the Court recognized in *NLRB v. Kentucky River Community Care, Inc.*, 532 U.S. 706, 713 (2001), "[T]he statutory term 'independent judgment' is ambiguous with respect to the degree of discretion required for supervisory status. . . . Many nominally supervisory functions may be performed without the 'exercis[e of] such a degree of . . . judgment or discretion . . . as would warrant a finding' of supervisory status under the Act." (citations omitted).

At the beginning of the shift, Endy or Cruz assigned scheduled staff and themselves to the various posts. If neither was working, the nursing supervisor or a CSS with seniority made the assignments. DeAbreu determined which employees would work a particular shift, and CSS supervisors had no authority to deviate from his decisions. They decided the appropriate posts for particular staff members, whenever possible placing them in positions in which they were most comfortable or proficient. However, all CSS staff were capable of performing all posts, and none of them had any special training or education that made them uniquely qualified for any particular assignment. Endy and Cruz both took into account rotation of more physically demanding assignments and particularly difficult neighbors, most of whom were in the facility for years. During the shift, they reassigned staff members as the need arose, based on who was available. In sum, none of these assignments required independent judgment because they were routine in nature. See *Mercy General Health Partners Amicare Home Care,* 2017 W 5034114 (2017) (assignments to home healthcare aides and LPN's were routine and not based on significant training, education, or particular expertise); *Azusa Ranch Market*, 321 NLRB 811, 811 (1996).

The Respondent cites (R. Br. 37) *Oakwood Healthcare*, above at 689, wherein the Board stated that in the health care setting, "assign" encompasses the responsibility to assign nurses and aides to particular patients, and that decisions affecting place, time or overall tasks can be a supervisory function, including "plum or bum" assignments. That case is distinguishable. There, the assignments were on a regular basis; here, they were made each night and staff were rotated so that employees shared the difficult tasks or patients.

Moreover, all of the employees were able to perform all functions and service all neighbors, Further, unlike the situation in *Oakwood Healthcare*, nothing suggests that the assignments Endy or Cruz made had any bearing on employees' opportunities to be considered for future promotions or rewards.

Accordingly, I find that Endy's assignment of work was of a routine nature and did not entail the level of discretion rising to "independent judgment."

"Assignment" incudes appointing an employee to an overtime period. *Modesto Radiology Imaging, Inc.*, 361 NLRB 888, 889 (2014). Here, DeAbreu advised the CSS supervisors which employees had worked too much overtime and should not be asked to stay over. If Endy and Cruz found themselves needing additional staffing, they decided which other employees to ask to stay. However, because they could only ask but not require employees to work overtime, this did not establish supervisory authority. *Entergy Mississippi, Inc.*, 357 NLRB 2150, 2156 (2011); *Golden Crest Healthcare Center*, 348 NLRB 727, 729 (2006).

(2) Direction of Work

The CSS supervisors regularly checked on the performance of staff who were doing CVOs and 15-minute checks and made certain that staff followed policies regarding breaks and filling out paperwork. Significantly, the night nursing supervisor was the highest-ranking official on site, and DeAbreu was normally available and ready to come in on his off hours if Endy or Cruz needed him.

In carrying out these duties, Cruz and Endy clearly acted in the interests of the Respondent and not solely for their own convenience. See *Pepsi-Cola Co.*, 327 NLRB 1062, 1062 (1999). However, DeAbreu never told Endy he could suffer any consequences for derelictions on the part of his staff. DeAbreu did verbally counsel Cruz concerning the conduct of CSS employees, but there is no specific evidence that these were reduced to writing and maintained, or that Cruz suffered any actual or potential adverse consequences as a result, either pecuniary or otherwise. Accordingly, the "responsible" requirement under Section 2(11) of the Act is lacking. See *Springfield Terrace*, 355 NLRB 937 (2010); *Golden Crest Healthcare*, above at 731; *Oakwood Healthcare,* above at 691–692; *NLRB v. Saint Mary Home*, 358 Fed.Appx. 255, 255 (2nd Cir. 2009).

I therefore find that Endy did not responsibly direct employees within the meaning of Section 2(11).

(3) Discipline

The record is unclear how much independent authority Endy and Cruz had to issue disciplines beyond merely following DeAbreu's directives and transmitting write-ups to him concerning attendance and employees sleeping on the job. DeAbreu's testimony on disciplines was very conclusionary and lacking in specifics, and Cruz was equivocal on how often he disapproves her recommended disciplines. I note her testimony indicated that disciplinary reports stay in employees' files whether or not the discipline is actually issued. However, the Respondent produced no write-ups Cruz prepared or evidence on their ultimate

disposition. None of the disciplinary reports contained in R. Exh. 18 were over the level of verbal warnings.

According to Cruz, DeAbreu had the final say on all disciplines that she proposed. The mere factual reporting of oral reprimands and the issuing of written warnings that do not automatically affect job status or tenure do not constitute supervisory authority. *Ohio Passavant Health Center*, 284 NLRB 887, 889 (1987). The Respondent has not shown that the warnings CSS supervisors issued "automatically affect[ed] job status or tenure" of employees. *Ohio Masonic Home*, 295 NLRB 390, 393–394 (1989), quoted in *The Republic Co.*, 361 NLRB 93, 99 (2014).

As stated earlier, the burden of establishing supervisory status lies with the party asserting it, and the Board is cautious not to construe supervisory status too broadly and exclude those performing "minor supervisory duties." Moreover, statutory status is not proven where the record evidence is inconclusive.

I therefore find that the Respondent has failed to meet its burden of showing Endy possessed the independent authority to issue discipline within the meaning of Section 2(11).

(4) Conclusion

Endy exercised no independent judgment in assignment, direction, or discipline and was not a statutory supervisor within the meaning of Section 2(11).[8]

**November 11 Meeting**

A. Alleged 8(a)(1) Violations

Inasmuch I have found Endy was not a statutory supervisor, I find inapposite cases cited by the Respondent (R. Br. 41) for the proposition that any questions he was asked on November 11 were permissible because he was a supervisor. Furthermore, the Respondent's mistaken belief that he was a supervisor does not afford the Respondent a defense. *Orr Iron, Inc.*, 207 NLRB 863 (1973), enfd. 508 F.2d 1305 (7th Cir. 1975); see also *Unifirst Corp.*, 335 NLRB 706 (2001).

At Endy's meeting with Peraino and DeAbreu, Peraino asked Endy if he knew who else was handing out authorization cards and if he knew who was signing them, thereby interrogating him about the union activities of other employees.

An employer's questioning of an employee is coercive if "under all the circumstances, the interrogation reasonably tends to restrain, coerce, or interfere with rights guaranteed by the Act." *Rossmore House,* 269 NLRB 1176, 1177–1179 (1984), affd. sub nom.. 760 F.2d 1006 (9th Cir. 1985). That test was met here, where Endy was called into a meeting in the administrative conference room with his supervisor, accused of illegal activity, and threatened with a lawsuit.

[8] In light of this conclusion, I need not address arguments in the Union's brief (U. Br. 26–28) that Endy was a relief supervisor who did not spend a regular and substantial portion of his worktime performing supervisory functions.

I therefore conclude that the Respondent unlawfully interrogated Endy about the union activities of other employees and therefore violated Section 8(a)(1). See *Advancepierre Foods, Inc.*, 366 NLRB No. 133, slip. op. 1 fn. 6 (2018); *Robert Orr/Sysco Food Services, LLC*, 343 NLRB 1183 (2004).

Threatening an employee with a lawsuit for engaging in protected activity when there is no anticipation of any actual lawsuit is coercive under Section 7 of the Act. *United States Postal Service*, 351 NLRB 205 (2007). There is no evidence that the Respondent ever took any steps to take any legal action against Endy for anything.

I therefore conclude that Peraino's threat that the Company would sue Endy also violated Section 8(a)(1).

Finally, Peraino also asked Endy why he wanted a union. As with solicitation, this is not specifically alleged in the complaint but is closely related to existing allegations and was fully and fairly litigated. An employer's questioning an open and active union supporter about his or her union sentiments is unlawful if accompanied by threats or promises. *Rossmore House,* above at 1176, 1177. Here, Peraino started the conversation by threatening Endy with a lawsuit. Therefore, this question also violated Section 8(a)(1). I need not address whether other statements of Peraino also constituted threats.

B. Suspension and Discharge

Under a *Wright Line* analysis, the General Counsel has established a prima facie case. Endy engaged in union activity, which was known to the Respondent. Again, the Respondent cannot defend on the ground that it had a good faith belief he was a statutory supervisor. The Respondent's animus toward Endy for his union activity is shown by Peraino's threat the Company would sue him, Peraino's interrogation regarding Endy's and other employees' union activities or sentiments, and Peraino's bellicose language (described hereinafter).

The Respondent contends (R. Br. 44) that Endy was discharged only after his outburst" at the meeting, when he intentionally damaged property and was insubordinate. This contention is totally undermined by the emails between Peraino, Camerota, and Rinn showing that the Respondent made the decision to discharge Endy even before the meeting took place.

I now turn to the second prong of *Wright Line* to determine whether the Respondent has rebutted the General Counsel's prima facie case.

Although the above emails stated other concerns with Endy (wearing a tee-shirt and listening on headphones to his cell phone), it is uncontroverted that those subjects were not mentioned during the meeting and were not included in the Respondent's documents as reasons for his termination. Endy had never received any disciplines for his attire or use of his headphones. I find, therefore, that the sole reason for Endy's suspension was his union activity. The Respondent conducted no further investigation after the suspension, and there is no doubt that his discharge was a foregone conclusion. Accordingly, his de facto date of discharge was November 11.

The pivotal question is whether Endy's conduct after DeAbreu told him that he was suspended was a valid reason to discharge him regardless of his union activity and the prior decision to terminate him.

I have discredited the testimony of Peraino and DeAbreu that he threw his badge at them; at most he threw it on the table, hardly amounting to significant misconduct. The sole remaining misconduct at issue concerns Endy's slamming the door and causing a small dent as he left the room. This was not a workplace setting, and Endy's conduct at issue was not protected activity. Therefore, cases addressing "opprobrious workplace conduct" are not directly applicable.

The Board has "long recognized that an employer cannot provoke an employee to the point where he commits an indiscretion and then rely on that conduct to terminate his employment." *Key Food*, 336 NLRB 111, 113 (2001); see also *NLRB v. M & B Headware Co.*, 349 F.2d 170, 174 (4th Cir. 1965). In *Key Food*, ibid, the employee touched the supervisor on the shoulder following the supervisor's abusive tirade. The Board found such conduct was not "so unreasonable in relation to the Respondent's provocation as to justify his discharge." Ibid.

I find that from the very start of the meeting, Peraino was accusatory, belligerent, and threatening, as well as made unlawfully coercive statements. He unlawfully stated that Endy's union activity was illegal and that the corporation was going to sue him. When Endy started to answer a question, Peraino told him, "Shut the fuck up." When Peraino unlawfully asked why Endy wanted a union, Endy responded that he was trying to make his job better, to which Peraino responded that if he did not like the job the way it was, why didn't he "fucking" leave. After Endy refused to name others who were handing out or signing authorization cards, DeAbreu told Endy that he was suspended pending investigation.

Although I do not condone Endy's slamming the door with force, I find that a reasonable person in his shoes would have been very upset by what had just taken place and that he was provoked into committing that action. See the cases cited above. I take into account that the dent in wall did not constitute major damage or interfere in any way with the Respondent's ability to run its operation. Moreover, two other designated supervisors who engaged in misconduct were suspended and demoted but not terminated: one for misconduct toward a neighbor; the other for "a verbal explosion and cursing" and "slam[ing] out of a meeting" and continuing her tirade in the cafeteria. In this regard, Carchidi testified that the latter was not terminated because her outbursts occurred in nonpatient areas—as was the administrative conference room.

I therefore conclude that the Respondent has failed to rebut the General Counsel's prima facie case and that Endy's suspension and discharge violated Section 8(a)(3) and (1) of the Act.

**Golden's Suspension and Discharge**

Inasmuch as Golden was a statutory supervisor, I dismiss the allegation that Golden was suspended on October 28 because the Respondent believed that she supported the Union.

Although supervisors are not covered by the protections of the Act, the termination of a supervisor violates Section 8(a)(1) in limited circumstances, including when it is based on a refusal to commit an unfair labor practice. *Texas Dental Assn.*, 354 NLRB 398 (2009), citing *Parker-Robb Chevrolet*, 262 NLRB 402 (1982) enfd. sub nom. *Automobile Salesmen's Union Local 1095 v. NLRB*, 711 F.2d 383 (D.C. Cir. 1983); see also *Howard Johnson Motor Lodge*, 261 NLRB 866 (1982), enfd. 702 F.2d 1 (1st Cir. 1983). As the Board stated in *Parker-Robb* (at 404), the discharge of supervisors for their refusal to commit unfair labor practices interferes with the right of employees to exercise their Section 7 rights.

The first question is whether the Respondent directed Golden to commit unfair labor practices; the second is whether she refused to commit them; and the third is whether that refusal led to her discharge and the Respondent's proffered reasons were pretextual.

I have concluded that Golden, along with directors and other UMs, were asked to unlawfully surveil employees to ascertain their union activities and sympathies.

After a consultants' afternoon meeting the week of November 11, Golden stated that employees were afraid to come inside the building and talk and that an LPN felt it was a witch hunt and bullying. When Peraino suggested that the LPN was for the Union, Golden replied that was ridiculous. Golden also stated that people (directors or UMs) who did not belong on the units were coming and talking to staff about the Union when they did not need to be there. After the meeting, when Golden met with Carhart and Carchidi, Golden told them that it was a witch hunt and ridiculous, people they had for the Union were not for the Union, and there was hostility in the building. She also told them that she would not be willing to come in on her time off to monitor the staff or go to other units to monitor the staff on her on time in order to prove she was not a union organizer or leader.

Significantly, Weir testified in connection with Golden's discharge that "[T]here was a frustration that she continued to do the same things that she had been educated not to do; not learning how to be a manager and to take those kind of directions regarding what we are able and could be . . . doing." As I stated, the record reflects no conduct to which he could have been referring other than the consultants' directives.

Accordingly, I conclude that Golden's objections to the Respondent's unlawful surveillance amount to a refusal to commit unfair labor practices.

The final question is whether that refusal resulted in her discharge, or the Respondent had a bona fide basis. Although not technically applicable, *Wright Line*, 251 NLRB 1083 (1980), enfd. 662 F.2d 899 (1st Cir. 1981), cert. denied 455 U.S. 989 (1982) is instructive. I set out above the *Wright Line* analytical framework.

Clearly, Golden's refusal to carry out the consultants' directives regarding (unlawful) surveillance played a role in her discharge. The next issue is whether the Respondent's

proffered defense—Golden failed to make the transition from a unit nurse to a UM—was a pretext.

The answer is yes. The Respondent's witnesses' efforts to denigrate Golden's performance as a UM were completely unconvincing. The following, in particular, support my conclusion:

(1) When Golden was called back from suspension on October 31, Weir stated that he was glad she was back, she had potential, and she was trying to become a better supervisor; further, that she was an integral part of the facility, the NBI staff was saying good things about her; and she was doing a really good job.

This totally refutes Weir's testimony that he observed Golden "struggle" as a UM and that he received "a lot" of complaints from staff regarding how she was managing NBI, as well as the statement that he made in her file that she was terminated for her inability to transition to her management role and for creating conflict between staff and management. Nothing in the record supports a finding that her conduct drastically changed between October 31, when he lauded her performance, and November 20.

(2) Weir's testimony shows that he did not initiate Golden's discharge, clearly suggesting it was motivated by the consultants.

(3) DON Carchidi had no involvement in the decision to discharge Golden even though she was the highest-ranking official in the nursing department.

(4) Golden received no disciplines for her performance as UM.

Moreover, the Respondent has demoted to staff positions, but not discharged, supervisors who were found to have engaged in misconduct.

I therefore conclude that the Respondent discharged Golden because of her refusal to commit unfair labor practices and thereby violated Section 8(a)(3) and (1) of the Act.

## CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Respondent is an employer engaged in commerce within the meaning of Section 2(2), (6), and (7) of the Act.

2. The Union is a labor organization within the meaning of Section 2(5) of the Act.

3. By discharging Tara Golden and suspending and discharging Josh Endy and Cathy Todd, the Respondent has engaged in unfair labor practices affecting commerce within the meaning of Section 2(6) and (7) of the Act and violated Section 8(a)(3) and (1) of the Act.

4. By the following conduct, the Respondent has engaged in unfair labor practices affecting commerce within the meaning of Section 2(6) and (7) of the Act and violated Section 8(a)(1) of the Act:

(a) Surveilled employees and gave the impression of surveillance of their union activities.
(b) Instructed supervisors to engage in unlawful surveillance.
(c) Threatened employees that their nursing licenses could be jeopardized because they supported the Union.
(d) Threatened employees with lawsuits for their engaging in union activities.
(e) Interrogated employees about the union activities of other employees.
(f) Interrogated employees about their union sentiments.
(g) Told employees that they could not get their annual wage increase because the Union had filed unfair labor practice charges.

5. By the following conduct, the Respondent has engaged in unfair labor practices affecting commerce within the meaning of Section 2(6) and (7) of the Act and violated Section 8(a)(3) and (1) of the Act:

(a) Discharged Tara Golden.
(b) Suspended and discharged Josh Endy.
(c) Suspended and discharged Cathy Todd.

## REMEDY

Because I have found that the Respondent has engaged in certain unfair labor practices, I find that it must be ordered to cease and desist and to take certain affirmative action designed to effectuate the policies of the Act.

The Respondent having discriminatorily discharged Josh Endy, Tara Golden, and Cathy Todd, it must offer them full reinstatement to their former jobs or, if those jobs no longer exist, to substantially equivalent positions, without prejudice to their seniority or other rights or privileges previously enjoyed, and to make them whole for any losses of earnings and other benefits suffered as a result of their discharges. Backpay shall be computed in accordance with *F. W. Woolworth Co.*, 90 NLRB 289 (1950), with interest at the rate prescribed in *New Horizons*, 283 NLRB 1173 (1987), compounded daily as prescribed in *Kentucky River Medical Center*, 356 NLRB 6 (2010).

In addition, the Respondent shall compensate Endy, Golden, and Todd for the adverse tax consequences, if any, of receiving a lump-sum backpay award and to file a report with the Regional Director for Region 3, within 21 days of the date the amount of backpay is fixed, either by agreement or Board order, a report allocating the backpay award to the appropriate calendar years. See *Advoserv of New Jersey, Inc.*, 363 NLRB 1324 (2016); *Don Chavas, LLC d/b/a Tortillas Don Chavas*, 361 NLRB 101 (2014). The Respondent shall compensate Endy, Golden, and Todd for their search-for-work and interim employment expenses regardless of

whether those expenses exceed interim earnings. Search-for-work and interim employment expenses shall be calculated separately from taxable next backpay, with interest at the rate prescribed in *New Horizons*, above, compounded daily as prescribed in *Kentucky River Medical Center*, above. In addition to the backpay-allocation report, the Respondent shall file with the Regional Director copies of Endy's, Golden's and Todd's corresponding W-2 forms reflecting the backpay awards. *Cascades Containerboard Packing—Niagara*, 370 NLRB No. 76 (2021).

On these findings of fact and conclusions of law and on the entire record, I issue the following recommended[9]

ORDER

The Respondent, NCRNC, LLC d/b/a Northeast Center for Rehabilitation and Brain Injury, Lake Katrine, NY, its officers, agents, successors, and assigns, shall

1. Cease and desist from

(a) Suspending, discharging or otherwise discriminating against employees for engaging in union activities.

(b) Discharging or otherwise discriminating against supervisors for refusing to engage in unfair labor practices.

(c) Surveilling or giving employees the impression of surveillance of their union activities.

(d) Instructing supervisors to engage in unlawful surveillance.

(e) Threatening employees with loss of their professional licenses or lawsuits because of their activities on behalf of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East (the Union).

(f) Interrogating employees about their union sympathies or the union activities of other employees.

(g) Telling employees that the Union is to blame for a freeze in their wages.

(h) In any like or related manner interfering with, restraining, or coercing employees in the exercise of the rights guaranteed them by Section 7 of the Act.

2. Take the following affirmative action necessary to effectuate the policies of the Act.

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[9] If no exceptions are filed as provided by Sec. 102.46 of the Board's Rules and Regulations, the findings, conclusions, and recommended Order shall, as provided in Sec. 102.48 of the Rules, be adopted by the Board and all objections to them shall be deemed waived for all purposes.

(a) Within 14 days from the date of the Board's Order, offer Josh Endy, Tara Golden and Cathy Todd full reinstatement to their former jobs or, if those jobs no longer exist, to substantially equivalent positions, without prejudice to their seniority or any other rights or privileges previously enjoyed.

(b) Make Endy, Golden, and Todd whole for any loss of earnings and other benefits suffered as a result of the discrimination against them in the manner set forth in the remedy section of the decision.

(c) Within 14 days from the date of the Board's Order, remove from its files any reference to the unlawful discharge of Golden and the unlawful suspensions and discharges of Endy and Todd, and within 3 days thereafter notify them in writing that this has been done and that the suspension and discharges will not be used against them in any way.

(d) Preserve and, within 14 days of a request, or such additional time as the Regional Director may allow for good cause shown, provide at a reasonable place designated by the Board or its agents, all payroll records, social security payment records, timecards, personnel records and reports, and all other records, including an electronic copy of such records if stored in electronic form, necessary to analyze the amount of backpay due under the terms of this Order.

(e) Within 14 days after service by the Region, post at its facility in Lake Katrine, New York, copies of the attached notice marked "Appendix."[10] Copies of the notice, on forms provided by the Regional Director for Region 3, after being signed by the Respondent's authorized representative, shall be posted by the Respondent and maintained for 60 consecutive days in conspicuous places including all places where notices to employees are customarily posted. The Respondent shall take reasonable steps to ensure that the notices are not altered, defaced, or covered by any other material. If during the pendency of these proceedings, the Respondent has gone out of business or closed the Lake Katrina, New York facility, the Respondent shall duplicate and mail, at its own expense, a copy of the notice to all current employees and former employees employed by the Respondent at any time since November 4, 2019.

(f) Within 21 days after service by the Region, file with the Regional

[10] If this Order is enforced by a judgment of a United States court of appeals, the words in the notice reading "Posted by Order of the National Labor Relations Board" shall read "Posted Pursuant to a Judgment of the United States Court of Appeals Enforcing an Order of the National Labor Relations Board."

Director a sworn certification of a responsible official on a form provided by the Region attesting to the steps that the Respondent has taken to comply.

Dated, Washington, D.C., April 21, 2021.

Ira Sandron
Administrative Law Judge

APPENDIX

NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES

Posted by Order of the
National Labor Relations Board
An Agency of the United States Government

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has found that we violated Federal labor law and has ordered us to post and obey this notice.

FEDERAL LAW GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO

Form, join, or assist a union
Choose representatives to bargain with us on your behalf
Act together with other employees for your benefit and protection
Choose not to engage in any of these protected activities

WE WILL NOT suspend, discharge, or otherwise discriminate against any of you because you support and assist 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East (the Union) or any other labor organization or engage in protected activities, or to discourage other employees from engaging in those activities.

WE WILL NOT discharge or otherwise discriminate against supervisors who refuse to interfere with, restrain, or coerce you in the exercise of your rights under Section 7 of the Act, as set forth at the top of this notice

WE WILL NOT surveil you or give you the impression of surveillance of your union activities.

WE WILL NOT instruct our supervisors to surveil your union activities.

WE WILL NOT threaten you with loss of your professional licenses or with lawsuits because of your union activities.

WE WILL NOT Interrogate you about your union sentiments or the union activities of other employees.

WE WILL NOT tell you that the Union is to blame for a freeze in your wages.

WE WILL NOT in any like or related manner interfere with, restrain, or coerce you in the exercise of the rights listed above.

WE WILL within 14 days from the date of the Board's Order, offer Josh Endy, Tara Golden,

and Cathy Todd full reinstatement to their former jobs or, if those jobs no longer exist, to substantially equivalent positions, without prejudice to their seniority or any other rights or privileges previously enjoyed.

WE WILL make Endy, Golden, and Todd whole for any loss of earnings and other benefits suffered as a result of our discrimination against them, in the manner set forth in the remedy section of the decision.

WE WILL remove from our files any reference to our unlawful discharge of Golden and our unlawful suspensions and discharges of Endy and Todd, and within 3 days thereafter notify them in writing that this has been done and that the suspensions and discharges will not be used against them in any way.

NCRNC, LLC D/B/A NORTHEAST CENTER FOR REHABILITATION AND BRAIN INJURY
(Employer)

Dated _____ By _____
(Representative) (Title)

The National Labor Relations Board is an independent Federal agency created in 1935 to enforce the National Labor Relations Act. It conducts secret-ballot elections to determine whether employees want union representation and it investigates and remedies unfair labor practices by employers and unions. To find out more about your rights under the Act and how to file a charge or election petition, you may speak confidentially to any agent with the Board's Regional Office set forth below. You may also obtain information from the Board's website: www.nlrb.gov

Niagara Center Building., 130 S. Elmwood Avenue, Suite 630, Buffalo, NY 14202-2465
(716) 551-4931, Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Administrative Law Judge's decision can be found at www.nlrb.gov/case/03-CA-252090 or by using the QR code below. Alternatively, you can obtain a copy of the decision from the Executive Secretary, National Labor Relations Board, 1015 Half Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20570, or by calling (202) 273-1940.

**THIS IS AN OFFICIAL NOTICE AND MUST NOT BE DEFACED BY ANYONE**

THIS NOTICE MUST REMAIN POSTED FOR 60 CONSECUTIVE DAYS FROM THE DATE OF POSTING AND MUST NOT BE ALTERED, DEFACED, OR COVERED BY ANY OTHER MATERIAL. ANY QUESTIONS CONCERNING THIS NOTICE OR COMPLIANCE WITH ITS PROVISIONS MAY BE DIRECTED TO THE ABOVE REGIONAL OFFICE'S COMPLIANCE OFFICER, (518) 419-6669.