

## **The Importance of Ontario's Nurses Association (ONA) for Nurses**

By Ansa Elias

As a first year nursing student, I was ecstatic to start my BScN at Ryerson University. In a matter of a few months, I was able to learn the fundamentals of nursing and build a strong foundation of principles. However, as 2020 progressed, society began to face a new set of obstacles that came with COVID-19.

I have seen my mother, a nurse of many years, working hard to help care for her patients with dedication and compassion during this pandemic. As a member of the ONA, she knows that while she cares for her patients, her union will be working hard to ensure her safety and protection at work. Established in 1973, the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) represents 68,000 Registered nurses in Ontario as well as 18,000 student affiliates. It is not only the voice of our nurses in Ontario, but also a platform for nurses and nursing students to create quality care for patients. The profession becomes more challenging due to problems such as unsafe patient workloads, mandatory overtime, and insufficient personal protective equipment (PPE), which in turn, leads to nurse turnover, retention, and burnout. By continuously improving the quality of working conditions, the ONA has made nurses feel safe and secure to provide competent care. Now more than ever, nurses need support. ONA has taken initiative to provide sufficient PPE, has petitioned with the Ontario government to recognize their hard work by the provision of hazard pay, and has also conducted town hall meetings for support and bilateral communication. They are ensuring that our fellow nurses have a good quality of life by listening and taking action.

As I begin my journey in the profession, I can say with confidence that my voice will be heard and supported, at all times.