

# ***Speak Out Now at Highland***

January 21st, 2026

## **AHS Workers Stand Up To the Board**

Last week's Board of Trustees meeting kicked off with over two hours of public comment about the recent layoffs, despite speakers being limited to one minute each. Speakers included AHS workers from across the healthcare system who stood up for their patients and demanded that the board stop these cuts. Physicians and department heads educated the board about how senselessly these cuts were made, and how much harm they were doing to patients. The most powerful speakers were patients themselves, giving passionate speeches about how AHS had saved their lives.

The board replied with nothing more than a handful of questions which painfully demonstrated that they did not even understand what cuts they had made or what the implications would be.

Earlier in the day, AHS workers assembled in Sacramento to lobby senators and demand that health care for our community be protected. Notably absent from this action were any members of the board or executive team, who couldn't be bothered to find a way to balance the budget other than slashing services.

AHS workers are ready to fight for the healthcare of their community! Share your voice at the next planned action: the Board of Supervisors meeting on Jan. 27th.

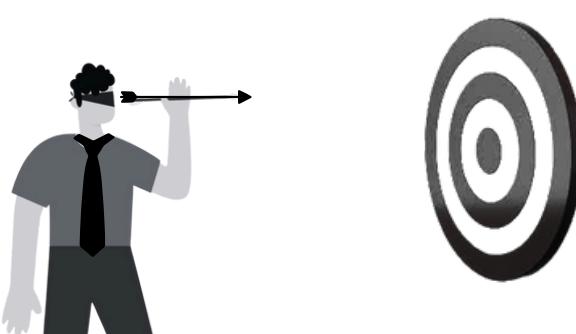
## **Is AHS Trying to Privatize Our Hospital?**

The rapidity and carelessness of these layoffs has made many of us question if AHS has had ulterior motives with these sudden cuts. Given we have been denied rational explanations for why certain positions and services were targeted, almost any guess is a good one at this point!

Less than two years ago, James Jackson sent out an email stating AHS "is facing a significant budget gap of \$100 million for the fiscal year 2024-2025." Yet, no mass layoffs occurred and we were able to maintain the functioning of vital services. So why is this time, and this budget, any different?

Of note, some board members and executives have ties to private hospitals. Could they be setting us up to fail, only to sell our facilities off to the highest bidder? Wouldn't be the first time this has happened...

## **How AHS Decided Who to Layoff**



 [speakoutsocialists.org](http://speakoutsocialists.org)

## **We Need the Union, And Then Some**

For those of us lucky enough to be in a union, it plays an important role. But we can't just rely on the union - we have to play an active role in struggles ourselves if we want to win. This layoff fight is a perfect example.

The union serves many important functions, though it is mostly focused on contracts and legalities. If you're a loud advocate for yourself and your coworkers, the union can have your back when AHS breaks the contract. It can file grievances and involve a lawyer if the boss refuses to follow the rules. It can also file unfair labor practices when AHS bargains in bad faith, making certain workplace actions like strikes "legal." All these functions are necessary.

But contracts and legal processes are not the whole fight. If we want to stop these layoffs, we'll need more than paperwork. The bargaining table is where agreements get signed, but real pressure comes from workers organizing on the floor. Workers are the ones who run this hospital. We know what works, what's unsafe, and what patients and staff actually need. When we're organized, we have real leverage.

Struggles aren't won on legal technicalities, they're won when workers speak out and act out. So don't sit and wait for the union to come up with all the solutions. Talk with your coworkers and share your ideas - no collective action is too small. Testify at board meetings, reach out to the community, share information, post on socials, make a plan for how you will stand up for other workers in your department. We have real power when we act together!

## **ER Boarding at Crisis Levels**

The Highland emergency department, although usually overcrowded, has recently been dangerously over capacity. With the hospital fully impacted with patients, there is nowhere to admit people waiting in the ER. This leads to patients who have orders to be admitted waiting for days on a gurney, instead of receiving appropriate inpatient hospital care. This is known as "boarding," and is shown to directly increase patient mortality, adverse events, staff burnout, violent episodes in the ER, preventable medical errors, and even raise overall healthcare costs!

Critically ill patients are waiting days to move up to the ICU. A gurney in a busy ER is no place for an unstable patient requiring specialized monitoring and treatment. And that's if you're lucky enough to secure a gurney in a hallway! The ER has been so full that some patients who arrive by ambulance are stuck waiting in an idling ambulance, not able to enter the doors of the hospital.

This is not the time to cut services and endanger our patients! We need safe staffing throughout AHS to keep our ER ready for emergencies, not filled with boarders who should be receiving hospital care.



**IG: @sonsocialists**

# ICE OUT!

## **WE CAN ORGANIZE TO DEFEND OURSELVES**

We can't wait for ICE to invade and terrorize our communities. Workers in hospitals, teachers in schools, and people in our neighborhoods have already begun to organize to stop ICE terror. Come to an organizing meeting and panel discussion with speakers who've already started to do this work. We can learn from these experiences and spread our organizing. It is up to us to defend ourselves.

**SUN. FEB. 1 @ 3pm (doors @ 2:45)**

**Judge Henry Ramsey Jr. Center**

**2939 Ellis Street, Berkeley**

**Near Ashby BART**

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