

Speak Out Now in Healthcare

A workplace newsletter for Highland and Kaiser workers

April 9th, 2024

If Hospital Workers Ran Highland...

Alameda Health System CEO James Jackson recently sent out a memo that AHS is facing a budget gap of \$100 million for the fiscal year, and needs to close the gap by June of this year. To solve this, AHS is hiring FTI Consultants to "identify opportunities to gain labor expense efficiencies and program optimization."

But without much digging it seems that some of the biggest inefficiencies are board members' salaries (they each make >\$500,000/year). Plus, the consulting fee for firms like FTI can be hundreds of thousands of dollars/year, adding to the pile of unnecessary financial costs. And let's not forget Highland's preference for hiring travel RNs, who have been shown to make significantly more than staff nurses, but have less stability and security. Or what about chronic understaffing, which leads to higher turnover and associated costs to train new hires?

This is just the low hanging fruit, free of charge. Ask any employee of AHS, and they are likely to be able to name many ways our work could be done more efficiently and safely for patients.

What's more, the company hired to cut costs, FTI, has been involved in running misinformation campaigns for multiple oil and gas companies to promote the use of fossil fuels. So it's clear they'll do whatever they need to serve the firms they work for, regardless of the cost on human health or the planet. So why are we trusting them to help our hospital? We, the people who actually do the work to make the hospital run, know what's best.



Don't Be Tricked: Nurses with a Living Wage Improve Patient Care!

Last week, Santa Clara County nurses of the Registered Nurses Professional Association went on a three-day strike at three public hospitals - Santa Clara Valley Medical Center (VMC), O'Connor and St. Louise. This was the union's first-ever strike as negotiations with the county reached an impasse over wage increases and working conditions. The nurses have been without a contract since October, and are asking the county for a 15% wage increase, and relocating nurses for temporary assignments to adjust for patient volume.

The mainstream media is once again playing into the hands of the bosses. County Executive James Williams put out a statement saying that with so many nurses on strike, the county has had to spend more than \$20 million to cover the gap and bring in nearly 1,000 contract nurses to work around-the-clock shifts across the three-day strike. What about using that very money to pay the nurses the salary they deserve? Local news coverage has also publicized a manipulative story about a two-year-old child from Gilroy who suffered a "very serious trauma injury" and was not able to receive timely care. It turns out this child was treated and is in recovery.

Of course, nurses can point to patient care issues that happen day after day due to under-staffing and poor management. However, the county does not seem as interested in publicizing the truth. So, let's set things straight. Don't be tricked! Short staffing and under paid medical workers lead to poor patient care. Stay tuned for the results of the strike, and the negotiated settlement.

Residents Unionize!

In recent weeks, residents from Kaiser Northern California have formalized the process of starting a union. This marks a significant step forward, potentially establishing the first union for residents in a Northern California Kaiser facility and addressing the absence of representation for this group among Kaiser healthcare workers. One of the primary motivations behind this unionization effort is the demand for higher pay and relief from grueling work hours, which can amount to as much as 80 hours per week.

Despite the ingrained tradition of enduring such demanding schedules, residents are banding together to challenge this reality and signal their readiness to advocate for change. The success of Stanford residents in securing a pay increase through unionization serves as inspiration for this ongoing fight.

Earth Day Event: REPORTS FROM "SACRIFICE ZONES"

Sat. April 13th @ 4pm - in person / zoom



Polluting industries have created "sacrifice zones" with the waste from their production. Come hear from people who have been organizing to stop the attacks on their communities.

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