

# Speak Out Now in Healthcare

A workplace newsletter for Highland and Kaiser workers

May 21st, 2024

## Don't Blame the Victim, Blame the System

Here in Oakland, at Highland Hospital, our doors are open and we provide care for those who have been pushed to the brink of society (the unemployed, the unhoused, the uninsured).

We have chosen to work at our public hospital that serves the highest need people in our community. While we are compassionate and dedicated to this cause, sometimes seeing the same patients discharged one day to then check back into the hospital the next can make us feel hopeless, or worse can cause us to play the blame game.

So who is really to blame for those pushed to the edge of our society? The capitalist system! Here in the Bay Area the average annual salary is \$50,117. Yet in the Bay Area, a minimum income of \$339,864 is needed to comfortably afford a mortgage on a house! On top of that, only 60% of Californians are covered by health insurance.

So let's not blame the victim for turning to drugs or alcohol as a relief from a society that has turned its back on the unhoused, the most needy and vulnerable. Let's remember who's responsible. We live in a country where the 3 million people who make up the wealthiest 1% of Americans are collectively worth more than the 291 million people that make up the bottom 90%. This should not be tolerated. We need to tear down this system, and build a world that cares and provides for the collective good of all.



**Oppression of Women  
Presentation & Discussion**

**June 5 @ 4:30pm PST**

on zoom

**Save the Date!**



**🌐 [speakoutsocialists.org](https://speakoutsocialists.org)**

## All Across the Board

At Kaiser there is a mystery to be solved - how can it be that experiences at Southern California and Northern California Kaiser are so different?

For Kaiser patients this could mean that transferring your Southern California Kaiser insurance while living in Northern California might be a nightmare. Accessing your account, especially Telehealth, sometimes becomes impossible, and not all the benefits are the same. Patients deserve equal access to care no matter their location.

Also, in Southern California, Kaiser healthcare workers are paid less and have less benefits as compared to Northern California workers, even though the cost of living is comparable. Do the math! According to apartments.com, the average rent in Los Angeles for a 2BD apartment is \$2,899 per month while in Oakland it is \$2,610. Meanwhile the difference in wages can be 30% less if you live in SoCal, despite doing the same job!

Healthcare workers in both ends of California work equally as hard and deserve the benefits of their work. Unequal salaries are a way of pitting workers against each other. Making pay equal is not a call to lower everyone's salaries. Instead we should fight for all our Kaiser coworkers to have high salaries, benefits and rights, all across the board.

## Ready to Strike But...

### We Need More Transparency!

At Highland, it's no secret that our wages aren't keeping up with inflation, we're critically understaffed, and management is making our jobs harder every day.

We depend on our union representatives to bring our concerns to the table and fight for a fair contract. But why are our contract negotiations conducted in secrecy? As union members, we're not allowed to attend these negotiations, or even to have a transcript of the meetings.

The latest update from the union was that management has rejected 13 of their proposals, but we don't know what these proposals are. They told us that they're fighting for a cost-of-living raise, but won't let us see the actual numbers in their proposal.

We know that business as usual can't continue, and we'll be out there on the picket lines, but we ARE the union and we deserve to know what we're fighting for!

**IG: @sonsocialists**

