

Speak Out Now in Healthcare

A workplace newsletter for Highland and Kaiser workers

June 4th, 2024

Kaiser Residents & Fellows Unionize – Cheers to the Next Steps!

There's something to celebrate at Kaiser Permanente Northern California: residents and fellow physicians have unionized, and joined Committee of Interns and Residents (CIR/SEIU). Kaiser is one of the largest healthcare providers in the state, and the city of Oakland's largest employer. Most of Kaiser's workforce, minus physicians, is already unionized. Residents and fellows are the first group of doctors in the system to unionize. Let's hope that more doctors will join Kaiser's unionized workers; the more of us in a union, the more we are all protected, and everyone's working conditions improve. In addition, unionized healthcare workers lead to better patient outcomes.

99% of residents and fellows who participated in the vote to unionize, voted in favor of the union. CIR represents about 32,000 resident physicians and fellows around the country. Since 2022, membership has jumped by about 60%, including the addition of 1,500 Stanford Health Care residents and fellows who reached their first contract with Stanford in late 2023. Now that Kaiser residents have joined the union, the total percentage of residents represented by CIR/SEIU in California is up to 82%.

Residents are the doctors that most patients interact with, regularly working over 80-hour weeks across multiple facilities. Despite this, they have had little say in decisions that directly impact patient care and working conditions. In addition, doctors in the Bay Area face cost-of-living challenges, because their pay is around \$60,000-\$80,000. Residents are typically part of a 3-6 year training program, depending on medical specialty, and fellows generally train for 1-2 years. This means that their roles are temporary, and that they will eventually transition out of both their positions and union to become doctors. So as result, now more than ever is the time to fight for a contract that will protect this batch of residents and fellows, and the next cohort of residents and fellows coming down the pipeline.

We are taking a 2 week break!

We'll be back at Kaiser on
Tuesday, June 25

and back at Highland on
Thursday, June 27

Oppression of Women
Presentation & Discussion

Wednesday, June 5 @ 5:00pm PST

Join on zoom:
tinyurl.com/v7jxesd8

No Cuts! Staff Up Kaiser Now!

Recently, Kaiser sent an email to the president of OPEIU local 29 (office, technical, professional and health care employees) regarding upcoming measures aimed at "optimizing reception staffing by standardizing and better utilizing resources." The precise implications of this statement remain to be seen. Could it mean the firing of senior reception staff? Perhaps a shift from full-time to part-time positions?

Regardless of the specifics, we can expect Kaiser's main goal with these changes is to follow the familiar recipe: maximizing profits through cost-cutting measures, mainly by understaffing and downsizing roles, and burdening a handful of workers with the workload meant for a larger team. In recent times, at Kaiser Oakland, the administration has routinely been relying on floats instead of hiring full-time staff and requesting additional duties beyond contractual obligations.

Additionally, what's particularly important in these recent announcements is the absence of consultation with the union, a clear violation of legal and contractual obligations. On top of that, in a recent statement issued by OPEIU 29, administration has been refusing to meet with union representatives. Kaiser should not be cutting vital roles that keep our hospital functioning and our patients safe. Staff up now!



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