

# Speak Out Now in Healthcare

A workplace newsletter for Highland and Kaiser workers

July 15th, 2024

## Highland ICU Nurses Win Victory in Firing Bad Manager

Last year, Highland Hospital hired a temporary manager to fill the vacant leadership role in the ICU. Nurses on the unit immediately found the new manager to be an incompetent bully, who flaunted his many years of experience but had no clinical or management skills to show for it.

As nurses shared their stories with each other, they found the manager's behavior to be consistently threatening, racist, and sexist, in addition to directly violating the terms of their union contract.

The nurses banded together to file an unfair labor practice with the union, and opened a formal investigation with HR. They circulated a petition around the unit demanding the manager's immediate termination, and presented it at the Board of Trustees meeting in June. The board could not defend the manager's inappropriate behavior and fired him on the spot!

Now, with the manager position still vacant, the nurses report that the ICU runs smoother than ever. The hospital runs just fine without management but let them try to run just one day without nurses!



## COVID Cases on the Rise...

COVID cases are on the rise again the Bay Area and many of us probably know of someone who has gotten it again in the past few weeks. While luckily this hasn't translated to a bunch of hospitalizations at Kaiser and Highland, this is the "new normal" to have COVID waves every so often with new variants.

Regardless of if we are "over" thinking about COVID, it is an ongoing hazard that faces healthcare workers. And now that any form of COVID leave has expired, more workers may be forced to come in sick, which negatively impacts themselves, coworkers and patients.



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

## Short Staffing Tragedy

A few days ago at Kaiser Vallejo, a man lost his life while waiting in the emergency room. He arrived in critical condition and needed urgent care. However, due to short staffing, he waited for 8 hours until he couldn't hold on any longer and collapsed.

At an administrative meeting, Kaiser leadership had been warned just a month before that patients could be affected by the low staffing ratios. During this time, nurses at Kaiser also started a petition to address the issue of short staffing; however, no action was taken by the hospital administration, thus leading to the recent death.

Short staffing has been an ongoing problem in many Kaiser hospitals as management tries to cut costs. Sadly, this short staffing shows the dire consequences of Kaiser consistently prioritizing profits over the health of patients and workers.

## TA Reached at AHS

The SEIU 1021 bargaining team has reached a tentative agreement (TA) with management, and voting takes place this week to ratify the contract.

Looking through the 161 page agreement can be a bit confusing - all three TAs (RN, General Unit, San Leandro Hospital) are combined into one doc in no apparent order, and there is no key describing what the various colors, underlining, or cross-outs mean.

Upon closer inspection, it appears that there are no contractual improvements in staffing. Instead RNs will be offered extra pay for certifications. Overtime pay will be provided for any time worked over regularly worked hours (though not starting until July 2025). Juneteenth will be a paid holiday. Case managers will have set staffing ratios. Some benefits to encourage workers to work more or take on new roles, yes, but not much to address our dangerous understaffing.

Still, if this contract gets approved, it will be up to us to enforce any new language and benefits. So read the TA, vote, and be prepared with your coworkers to remind management what our rights are!

Join us at our next event...

## The Forced Migration Crisis at the Border

Saturday, July 20 @ 4:00pm PST

South Berkeley Senior Center,  
2939 Ellis Street, Berkeley, CA 94703

Join on Zoom:  
[tinyurl.com/v7jxesd8](https://tinyurl.com/v7jxesd8)

IG: @sonsocialists

