



September 9, 2021

## Support for Our Safety Strike Has Never Been Stronger!

One month ago, we took a stand for patient safety and walked out of the abnormally unsafe workplace created by for-profit Acadia Healthcare at Cascade Behavioral Health. We won't stand for anything less than the security and staffing we need to provide safe, quality care to our patients. Our community understands that we are skilled professionals, and our work transforms our patients' lives. By joining us on the picket line and sharing their words of support and strength, they show us every day that they stand with us in our fight for patient safety.

**One day longer, one day stronger!**



"Look at the money management are spending on fence, security, things that doesn't matter like bringing in an ice cream truck. We are not a child, but what they are doing is a very childish act. There is nothing that is coming out from them. We expect little, but leadership has failed at Cascade. We, the workers, built Cascade from scratch. We were all here before this leadership came. We built this place and we made it to be for our patients, for the most under-served people. The only thing they care about is their ego, their ego is what's driving them. Especially after the CNO came things changed, with racialized comments toward immigrant people, weaponizing our accents. That is totally unacceptable." **-Meskerem Ereso, 3W RN**



"We are out here on the street for a safety strike. It's been six weeks and I have seen them spending money for the fence, on hiring security for the parking lot and that's unacceptable. All we are asking for is safety and security, and for staffing for our patients. When we say Cascade is not safe — I have seen a lot of employees getting hurt. Broken legs, shoulders. Even me, I was out of the job on L&I because I got hurt on my wrist and fingers. We don't have any resources to control aggressive patients. When the incident happened on August 1, we said enough is enough, and we are out here asking for safety. We are not going back until our safety is guaranteed." **-Meseret Amare, Mental Health Tech**



### • • • • • Our community stands with us • • • • •

- State Rep. David Hackney, 11th Legislative District
- Burien Mayor Jimmy Matta
- April Sims, Secretary-Treasurer, Washington State Labor Council
- Tukwila Councilmember Cynthia Delostrinos Johnson
- APALA Seattle Chapter

Mary Le Nguyen, Executive Director, Washington CAN

Brandon Hersey, Candidate for Seattle School Board

Toshiko Hasegawa, Candidate for Seattle Port Commission, Pos. 4

Teamsters Local 117

PROTEC17



## An essay by 13-year-old Aferata Belie and 14-year-old Tsion Tesfaye

Aferata is an 8th grader at Highline Virtual Academy; Tsion is a 9th grader at Raisbeck Aviation High School in Tukwila. Aferata is the daughter of Yeshimebet Desta, a CNA at Cascade Behavioral Health; she and Tsion have joined Cascade workers on the picket line to support the ongoing strike for safety.



"What's the point of building a hospital if you're not going to run it correctly? Move your huge ego aside and admit you made a mistake and consult the workers. Provide their needs, it's that simple. How does it feel to have lost so many hard working, patient, understanding, passionate and outstanding staff members?"

Is the profit really worth all of this? We wrote this to tell a part of the whole truth. We tried to incorporate as much information that we found, and even though not everything was covered, we hope you get educated on what's happening at Cascade. We hope our words can be of help to those who try to find out the truth." **Tsion Tesfaye**



"I want to work in the medical field because I want to help people. I hope to God that I don't end up like you. This gave me second thoughts about going into the medical field but I know how to learn from my mistakes. I also know not to let my ego take over so the second thoughts won't be a problem, but thank you for giving me a learning opportunity."

For anyone who wants to go into the medical field, please don't let things like this discourage you, of course things won't always be amazing. There might be some problems here and there, you will also probably make mistakes but take the opportunity to learn from them." **Aferata Belie**

Many people enter the medical field to help people. They're the type of people that care for patients as they recover, and assist families through some of the most difficult times in their lives. You would imagine that these types of people care about the safety of patients and their fellow coworkers. But what if this wasn't true? Imagine working in a hospital where you're always at risk of getting hurt. This is the reality for workers at Cascade Behavioral Health Hospital. Workers go through many hardships as soon as they enter the hospital doors. From an unsafe workspace and treatment environment, to not filtering patients that enter the hospital, workers have gone on strike because they've had enough.

From the coldness, to the cleanliness, to the patients, these are a few of the things that you notice when you first enter a hospital. Instead of this, the first thing many workers noticed when they first entered this hospital is how dangerous it was. You might think that mental health hospitals are always dangerous but this isn't always the case. Many hospitals employ security officers to help address violent and aggressive behaviors, along with their other hospital duties. Having security officers is ideal for many workers but this isn't the case for this facility. Standards of safety have been criticized, and security guards have been requested time after time by many workers but instead of listening to their employees, Cascade decides to ignore their workers.

A hospital's main goal should be to strive to provide the best care for every patient and that should be reciprocated by workers. Instead, while workers risk their lives caring for their patients, Cascade values profit over patients. There have been many incidents where workers have gotten major injuries and Cascade responds by doing nothing. A huge reason why this happens is because patients aren't filtered. Whether they are known to have violent behaviors or they just aren't fit for the hospital environment they're always able to get admitted.

When workers come into work they're always at risk of getting hurt. Staff had three or four code greys per shift, meaning that there is a combative or violent patient in the unit. A recent incident that occurred was very out of hand, as a worker who's currently on the picket line states "to the point where 15 staff members were needed to put down one single patient, and out of the 15 staff members, 11 of us were injured. So when we say enough is enough, there is a reason behind it because we put up with it for so long." Workers had made an attempt to call the police but because of a new police reform law, the police were prevented from coming. Management had been notified after these events occurred, in writing and verbally, which resulted in no response.

It could be argued that Cascade doesn't have the funds to pay for security guards but that is far from the truth. They have the funds but use them for the wrong reasons. Management's lack of respect for workers is always on full display, especially when they installed a privacy fence to block out the picket line, which would be an example of using funds for the wrong reasons, and an attempt to intimidate staff with police presence. Another instance of this would be when they hired security guards against staff, that wouldn't even be protecting workers or even patients but protecting management. Protecting them from what you ask? From the truth. Time and time again instead of standing with their staff they choose to ignore and lie about what's really been happening. In a statement that the previous CEO Michael Uradnik released, it states him saying that everything that has happened is all a story. "Thank you for providing a summary of your planned story." What story?! Is people getting injured a story? Many workers got terminated because they were fighting for their rights. The reason behind this mass termination is because workers had participated in "unauthorized and unprotected employee activities." The only thing that should be unauthorized is how workers are treated, and the only thing that's been unprotected are workers.

As you can see Cascade has lots of adjustments to make. The reality is, Cascade needs to get their priorities straight. Their main priority should be patients, not profit. They need to make patient and staff safety a priority if they want to properly provide patient care. Christopher West, the CEO of Cascade, said in an open letter to the community, "We cannot say it enough that the well-being and safety of our patients and staff always have been and will be our key priorities." Mr. West, prove to the workers that you can make this statement true. If you would like to support, spread the truth about what's going on everywhere. The more people hear of this, the more likely a change will be made.