



# Frontline Kaiser Workers are Drowning Without Enough Staff

**85,000 in coalition unions call on Kaiser leaders to use Partnership to focus on hiring and retention before it is too late**

On Friday, September 30th, on the 25th Anniversary of the groundbreaking Labor Management Partnership between Kaiser Permanente and the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions, coordinated delegations of workers delivered tens of thousands of individual messages to regional leaders illustrating the impacts of short staffing on patient care and workers' health and safety. We joined with OPEIU to deliver messages to clinic leadership at Capitol Hill, Bellevue and Tacoma Specialty Centers.



“We worked through an entire pandemic with bare minimum compensation. We worked when we were only allowed 1 mask per week, we worked when managers took away all of our hand sanitizer, and we continue to work short staffed every single day. How has Kaiser recognized our commitment to our patients? We get to watch Kaiser shell out thousands for agency staff and offer new hires up to 10k while long-term staff get nothing. We get a retention bonus pulled off the table. It’s disrespectful. We marched on management at the Tacoma clinic with a unified message: step up to the Partnership, come to the table, bargain real recruitment and retention wage increases that respect our work!” - **Kelsey Loomis, MA-C, Tacoma Specialty Float Pool**



COVID-19 exhausted and traumatized healthcare workers, pushing many to leave the field in large numbers. Factor in skyrocketing inflation eating away the value of Kaiser wages, and the strain on the remaining understaffed workforce is almost unbearable.

Record attrition and tens of thousands of vacancies are undercutting the patient care experience as complaints about long wait times and less personally focused care pile up.

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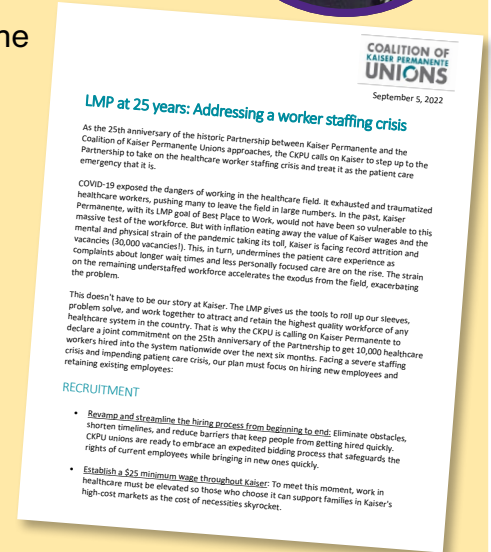
“Every day, coworkers are leaving Kaiser to go work at other hospitals, like Swedish. Our wages can no longer keep up with these other companies since they’re all agreeing to big raises. If Kaiser doesn’t bargain raises they will not survive in this competitive market.” – **Anthony Rodriguez, RN, Bellevue Urgent Care**



Earlier this month, On Labor Day, the Coalition sent a letter calling on Kaiser Permanente to hire 10,000 healthcare workers nationwide over the next six months and focus on retaining existing employees by:

- ✦ Streamlining hiring
- ✦ Establishing a \$25 minimum wage
- ✦ Adjusting pay scales to attract talent
- ✦ Accelerating investment in workforce
- ✦ Training and job placement
- ✦ Addressing worker burnout

Twenty-five years ago, visionary leaders imagined a new approach to labor relations that could harness the energy and ideas of labor and management through a groundbreaking Labor Management Partnership. Partnership principles like mutual respect and a decision-making structure requiring labor to have an equal seat at the table transformed Kaiser into the leading healthcare system in the country.



In the past, Kaiser Permanente would not have been so vulnerable to this test of the workforce. Today, the Labor Management Partnership struggles to meet its Best Place to Work goal when employees cannot get a day off and are pressured to work overtime due to short staffing. “Once innovative and cutting edge, it is becoming harder to distinguish Kaiser from other hospitals in their staffing, patient care, and labor relations approach,” says **Caroline Lucas, Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions, Executive Director.**

**The Coalition Unions jointly negotiate a National Agreement, which expires in September 2023, and includes wages, benefits, and the structure of the Partnership itself.**

## Our annual wage increase is coming in October – here’s how it works

On our paycheck that covers the first full pay period after October 1, we will be seeing our annual across-the-board wage increase. Now bargained as part of our National Agreement, part of our wages are linked to the Washington regions financial goals. This year, our increase will be 2% plus an additional 1% lump sum bonus. We do not think it makes sense to link our wage increase to a financial goal of the organization over which we don’t have control. As we head into bargaining next year, we will be pushing for higher wages that are not measured against the organizations success, but show respect for our work and the value we bring to making Kaiser a great place to receive care.

We know it’s going to take meaningful wage increases for Kaiser to continue to be a leading healthcare provider in Washington. That’s why we need to go into bargaining unified and strong. That starts with all of us making our voices heard in our initial bargaining proposals and highlighting our top priorities.



**Take the bargaining survey today:**  
[1199nw.org/3PUHlx](https://1199nw.org/3PUHlx)