

Local Bargaining is Around the Corner

While our national bargaining team works hard at the table in California to secure a commitment to staffing, the across-the-board wages we need to recruit and retain, and other improvements to our national agreement, we are preparing to come to the table locally. We have notified Kaiser of our intent to bargain and will soon be putting together a bargaining team of frontline staff who represent all of the various locations, job classes, shifts and identities our members hold. Our priority issues, as we identified in our bargaining surveys, are staffing and scheduling, compensation, education and training, racial justice, and improving benefits.

“As orthopedic techs, we play a critical role in delivering high-quality care to patients with musculoskeletal conditions. From assisting orthopedic surgeons in surgical procedures to providing post-operative care and supporting patients in their recovery process, our expertise and dedication are essential to the healthcare system. However, in this round of bargaining, we cannot be forgotten by Kaiser when it comes to fair compensation. Despite our valuable skills and contributions, we often face low wages and that leads to difficulties recruiting skilled ortho techs. It is crucial that our hard work and commitment to patient care are recognized, and we are fairly compensated for our indispensable role in the orthopedic field. Furthermore, we are disheartened by the fact that our pay falls significantly below not just other healthcare organizations in the state, but even lower than every other segment within our own organization, Kaiser Permanente. We will be standing united with 85,000 coalition members for the respect and recognition we deserve.”

- **Joshua York, Ortho Tech, Bellevue**



Next steps

- 1

May 16–18:
National Bargaining Session 2,
Los Angeles
- 2

Nominating our local
bargaining team

National Bargaining Kicks Off in Oakland

SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Leaders Join Hundreds of Other Coalition Union Members at the National Bargaining Table

We know that our strength is our unity, and we are united with 85,000 Kaiser Coalition union members across the country. We are calling on Kaiser to address the staffing crisis now. Staffing was a struggle before the pandemic, and now it has become a full-blown crisis.

Learn more about how short staffing is affecting our patients and us as healthcare workers.

ckpu.org/2023-staffing

SEIU Healthcare 1199NW National Bargaining Team (left to right) Tony Rodriguez, RN, Bellevue Urgent Care; Alanna Martin, Social Worker, Capitol Hill; Marie Neumayer, MA, Spokane and Union Partnership Representative; Jane Hopkins, President, SEIU Healthcare 1199NW; Teri Murray, Liaison Nurse, Kitsap and Union Partnership Representative; Jessica Wolfe, RN, Capital Hill OR; Cecily Dash, MA, Rainier Primary Care; Jamie Vanden Bos, MA, Silverdale and Contract Specialist; Le’Nae Jackson, Organizer, SEIU Healthcare 1199NW

*Not pictured: Chua Vue, EVS Tech, Tacoma Specialty Center

“There was so much fire in the room in our first session, and it was clear that the same issues we are fighting for in Washington around wages, retention and recruitment are shared by our Coalition siblings nationally. We are united and ready to fight for and with each other, and fight on behalf of our patients. Kaiser needs us more than we need them, and they need to show us a reason to stay. They say they have no money but forget to mention the 10 billion dollars they have made in investments throughout the pandemic. It’s time for Kaiser to show us they want to keep us here.”

- **Alanna Martin, Social Worker, Capitol Hill**



Our Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions (CKPU) National Bargaining Team



“With this being my first time at national bargaining, I wasn’t sure what to expect, but I went into it hopeful. I was hopeful that Kaiser would be ready to show that they value their 85,000 coalition members by listening to and validating our concerns. The fact that the CEO of Kaiser, Greg Adams, was not physically present at this very important first step into continued partnership was disappointing, to say the least. 350 coalition union bargaining team leaders came to convey our commitment to the partnership with Kaiser, to show that we value preserving this relationship. Kaiser did not demonstrate the same. Even with that, I continue to be optimistic. I know we can count on our unity and action to move Kaiser leadership to be present and invested in making this a partnership that is beneficial to all.”

- **Cecily Dash, MA, Rainier Clinic**



Kaiser Has the Money

Management spent a lot of their time talking about what a bad financial year 2022 was for them. But here's the reality: Kaiser's net worth is \$58.9 billion, and it made \$20 billion in profits in the last five years. It's not a question of money. It's a question of priorities and values.



Coalition Leaders Set Expectations for National Bargaining

Coalition leaders nationwide echoed the same message to Kaiser executives that it is time for a little less talk and a lot more action. When a panel asked Linda Bridges, OPEIU Local 2 President in the Mid-Atlantic, what keeps her up at night, she answered, "Kaiser is not hearing us. Partnership has become a shell, just talking points or words on a page. We need a commitment to solutions. If Kaiser doesn't act, members will."



Our first challenge to Kaiser: Hire 10,000 new workers

The biggest issue we have to solve at Kaiser is the chronic understaffing we face in our facilities. And Kaiser knows it too! They shared some eye-popping statistics with us:

- ★ 11.1% of all Coalition positions are vacant
- ★ The average vacancy takes 80 days to fill (and that's just the average – we know it sometimes takes more than six months!)

Given the urgency of the staffing crisis, we presented a challenge to management: let's commit to an increase of 10,000 new Kaiser employees into Coalition positions by the end of 2023. **And they said yes!** To accomplish this, a small national working team of Kaiser and Coalition members will be mobilized to focus on:

- ★ Reducing the use of expensive contractors
- ★ Reducing the overall time it takes to fill vacancies
- ★ Removing structural barriers to hiring
- ★ Finding inefficiencies in the hiring process

This group will report back at the next bargaining session on May 16.

"It has been amazing gathering with the 350 bargaining team members of the Coalition. We are the workers who have chosen to remain in healthcare and at Kaiser throughout the pandemic, throughout watching our peers get unprecedented raises. We are committed to making this partnership work and fixing the problems with Kaiser, for ourselves and for our patients. In order to continue choosing to stay, we need Kaiser to step up and take care of us. It has become absolutely clear that changing market forces require Kaiser to invest strongly in competitive wages and benefits, or we won't be able to recruit and retain the best staff. It is clear that we are all united and are ready to put everything on the line to remind Kaiser that if we can't come to terms in these negotiations, Kaiser has more to lose than we do."

- Jessica Wolfe, RN, Capitol Hill Urgent Care, (our representative on the staffing work group)



Staffing by the Numbers

We know staffing is bad. We are at a crisis point. We are burnt out. We can't fill vacancies. Staff are leaving for higher paying jobs and sign-on bonuses. Patient access is the worst it's ever been. We've lived the experience of bad staffing at Kaiser and now have the numbers to back up our experience.

At the end of 2022, Kaiser Permanente of Washington had the highest vacancy rate of any Kaiser region, at 13.9% of regular position vacant, with over 500 vacant SEIU Healthcare 1199NW positions.

Of the 15 positions with the highest vacancy rates at Kaiser Permanente of Washington, 12 are in our bargaining units:

RN
Medical/Clinical Assist
Masters Level Therapist
LVN-LPN
Environmental Specialist/Tech
PT
ED Tech/Assistant
Tech / Assist / Coordinator (MHW)
Surg Tech
Sterile Tech
Patient Care Assistant/Tech
APRN

Of the 15 positions with the longest time-to-fill rate (the time it takes to fill a vacant position), 11 are in our bargaining units:

Position/Role	Avg TTF
Environmental Specialist/Tech	174
Sterile Tech	153
Masters Level Therapist	135
Surg Tech	126
Anesthesia Tech	109
Patient Care Assistant/Tech	94
OT	88
Orthopedic Tech	86
Tech / Assist / Coordinator (MHW)	84
RN	80
Mat. Mgmt Specialist/Coordinator/Tech	79

These numbers are shocking, but not surprising. As we lag farther and farther behind in wages, our staffing becomes worse and worse. It's time for Kaiser to step up to the table, recommit to partnership and make big investments in wages, recruitment, retention and education so we can again be the best place to work and the best place to get care.

"These numbers just back up what we've been saying for years in our EVS work group - EVS wages are too low to attract new staff and keep the ones we have. Even when Kaiser is saying we are fully staffed on the Kitsap Peninsula, we are one call out away from having to cover multiple clinics by ourselves. I recently worked my regular 8-hour shift, went home for less than 6 hours and then came back and worked almost 16 more hours, because we didn't have coverage when people called out. This is not sustainable. We need more positions and we need higher wages so we can fill those positions quickly, not in 174 days. With all the problems in EVS, it doesn't seem like Kaiser realizes how important we are in preventing infection. We are getting organized and ready to fight to be valued as important members of the patient care experience." - Tashe Tibbs, EVS Tech, Travel Group

