

## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

## Kaiser Permanente unions shocked by two-tier wage proposal

Is Kaiser Permanente's reputation as an industry-leading model union employer about to end? Maybe, judging by an Aug. 5 union contract bargaining session, in which management proposed to pay future new hires dramatically lower wages.

The Alliance of Healthcare Unions, a 21-union coalition representing 52,000 Kaiser employees in eight states, is calling it the worst proposal from management in the 20-year history of Kaiser's labor-management partnership.

The partnership is supposed to be about collaboration, joint

problem solving and mutual respect. But a "two tier" wage system like the one Kaiser proposed is straight out of the union-busting playbook because it divides workers and teaches them that their unions are weak. It violates the bedrock union principle of equal pay for equal work. And it destroys union member morale. Paid less, new hires come to resent more senior coworkers for having sold them out before they arrived. As time passes, those new hires eventually become the majority of the union bargaining unit.

"We are stunned by Kaiser's

offer," said Kaiser Permanente RN Jodi Barschow, president of Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (OFNHP) in an Aug. 11 press statement. OFNHP represents about 4,000 Kaiser nurses, health techs, and physician assistants in Oregon. "After what we have been through these past few years, this is insulting to both to our healthcare workers and the communities who rely on them for care."

Lower pay for new hires wouldn't just be deeply unfair, but Barschow said it would also hurt Kaiser's ability to recruit and retain new staff — during a

severe nationwide healthcare worker staffing crisis that is already diminishing patient care.

"Do you know what's going on in this country right now? Do you know what's going on in your own facilities?" said Alliance of Healthcare Unions executive director Hal Ruddick in a bargaining update for union members. "We're facing a staffing crisis, a devastating surge, and a worker shortage that is increasing every day.... And after making \$2.2 billion in operating profit last year, you want to pay even less to new hires? It's absurd and irresponsible to think

that the solution to staffing shortages is to lower wages and benefits for future workers."

The two sides are scheduled to meet for further negotiations in late August and Sept. 10, but time is running out before many of the contracts expire on Oct. 1. At that point, workers would be allowed to strike after giving 10 days notice.

—DM

## SOLIDARITY

OFNHP is holding a "Rally to Save Lives" Sept. 28, 6 to 7:30 p.m., outside Kaiser's Portland headquarters, 500 NE Multnomah Street.

## Oregon AFL-CIO to host virtual Labor Day celebration

The Oregon AFL-CIO will host the 2021 Oregon Virtual Labor Day Celebration Monday, Sept. 6, starting at noon.

The celebration will feature special guest speakers, workers whose experiences show why labor must keep fighting for important legislation like the PRO Act and expanded infrastructure investment.

"On Labor Day, and every day, it's critical that we continue to fight for progress to improve the lives of workers and families," said Oregon AFL-CIO President Graham Trainor.

In a statement, the Oregon AFL-CIO said "As the pandemic continues, we know that working people will need a recovery that truly centers around our needs instead of Wall Street. That's why workers are going on strike — and winning — across the country. But that's also why we need to pass laws that make it easier for workers to join unions and to expand access to care. And we know that even before the pandemic, our economy left far too many people behind. We need to build back better and create an economy that is just and equal for all."

For more information about the Labor Day celebration, or to RSVP, go to <https://orafl-cio.org/>.

The event will be viewable on Facebook Live and YouTube at noon on Labor Day.



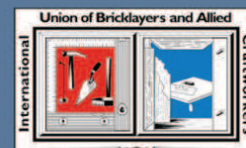
## FROM THE OFFICERS &amp; STAFF AT BAC LOCAL 1

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SEC/TREASURER: SHAWN LENCZOWSKI

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: STEVE DYSON

RECORDING SECRETARY: SCOTT FROMM



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