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YOUR GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA POLICY AND POLITICS



EMILY HOEVEN • AUGUST 25, 2022

Presented by National Lifeline Association, Natural Resources Defense Council-Action Fund, and California Water Service,

3+ State launches another investigation into Kaiser



National Union of Healthcare Workers members strike in front of Kaiser Permanente in Fresno on Aug. 15, 2022. Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local

California health regulators have opened a “targeted enforcement investigation” into Kaiser Permanente to determine whether it’s providing timely access to behavioral health appointments while [thousands of its mental health workers are on strike](#), Rachel Arrezola, deputy director of communications and planning for the California Department of Managed Health Care, confirmed in a Wednesday statement to CalMatters mental health reporter Jocelyn Wiener. The department “is concerned about the potential for immediate harm to enrollees based on the very serious nature of allegations that the plan is not providing timely appointments to enrollees required by the law,” Arrezola said. (Separate from the strike, [California health authorities are also investigating](#) whether Kaiser is providing adequate and timely mental health coverage in general.)

The National Union of Healthcare Workers, which represents the 2,000 Kaiser mental health employees who have been striking for more than week, [had previously filed a complaint with the state](#) alleging that Kaiser was canceling thousands of behavioral health appointments and failing to provide patients with alternatives in violation of state law. Sal Rosselli, the union’s president, said in a Wednesday statement that even stronger state action is needed: “Rapid intervention to protect patients who are having their appointments canceled and their care denied is required. Enforcement of the laws on the books, designed to protect the rights of patients, is overdue.”

Deb Catsavas, senior vice president of human resources at Kaiser Permanente Northern California, [said in a statement last week](#) that the union's "decision to strike is intended to hurt Kaiser Permanente's ability to meet the needs of our patients: that is the point of the strike."