

KAISER CONTRACT CAMPAIGN UPDATE

April 19, 2019

Exciting news! Patients held a rally Wednesday outside Kaiser's corporate headquarters during which they shared their struggles to get mental health care and demanded a prompt meeting with CEO Bernard Tyson.

But when they tried to go inside to schedule a meeting with Tyson, Kaiser officials locked the doors. The San Francisco Chronicle photographed the scene. You can watch a video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdnrh4pPZK8> or <https://www.facebook.com/healthcareworkers/videos/683211682094685/>

The patients decided to confront Kaiser after Tyson ignored their request for a meeting to discuss how Kaiser can improve its mental health care. Tyson agreed to a meeting only after they announced the rally, and finally proposed a date one day after the patients were locked out of Kaiser headquarters.

The patients included Seong and David Brown, whose daughter died by suicide at age 19; Kevin Dickens who attempted suicide after being unable to see a therapist for over two months; and Susan Runyan, who got excellent cancer treatment from Kaiser, but was denied one-on-one therapy when she was having suicidal thoughts. "The lack of parity is astounding and disturbing," she said.

They were joined by local elected leaders and Kaiser clinicians. Melinda Ginne, a retired Kaiser psychologist, recalled asking management for help with her caseload of 91 patients per week only to be told she had a time-management problem.

"I want to say to the patients that we've seen today — and all the other patients in the Kaiser system — that the providers are trying everything we can to help change the system," Ginne said.

The patients were inspired by the support they received and were excited at the prospect of stating their case to Tyson.

"We believe Kaiser will not fix its mental health care unless it understands how its failures are ruining lives," David Brown said.

And, if Tyson doesn't fix its mental health care, Kevin Dickens suggested it was time for Kaiser to find a new CEO.

"Prove to us that you really, truly want to make a change," Dickens said referencing Tyson during the gathering. "If you can't do it, step away. Get somebody else in here who can, because that's what we need."