

Dear NASW-CA Members and Colleagues,

The National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter (NASW CA), one of the country's largest and most influential social work organizations, expresses profound concern over the urgent and escalating mental health crisis affecting individuals worldwide after COVID-19. This crisis has underscored clinicians' harsh realities: overwhelming workloads, inadequate compensation, and unhealthy working conditions.

Social workers and clinical practitioners are essential to delivering critical mental health care and interventions. Today, we stand united with Kaiser Permanente mental health providers who are currently on strike, demanding better working conditions and fair pay. It is unacceptable that social workers report severe stress, lack of pensions, and insufficient salaries, all of which directly impair patient care. Patients deserve continuity, consistency, and timely access to mental health support. It is disingenuous to expect high-quality, trauma-informed care when providers are experiencing burnout and feel undervalued.

Kaiser Permanente must return to the negotiation table and address these critical issues. As a professional social work association, we are heartfelt in our commitment to standing with our Southern California colleagues who courageously advocate for change.

Kimberly Warmsley, Executive Director of the California NASW Chapter, MSW, LCSW, states, "The time is now to ensure realistic working conditions and provide equitable pay and recognition for professionals who deliver essential services. Social workers and therapists were on the frontlines during the pandemic; we are trusted partners and advocates for our communities. Kaiser must exemplify the commitment to providing resources, support, and fair compensation for dedicated social workers who strive to protect vulnerable populations".

We applaud the unwavering dedication of every social worker at Kaiser Permanente in Southern California who is standing up so boldly against a broken mental health system that forces patients to wait months for therapy appointments, violating state laws.

We call on the community to support the striking clinicians at Kaiser by contributing to the hardship relief fund organized by the National Union of Healthcare Workers. Every donation will directly support them.