



# NUHW PULSE

Seton Medical Center and Seton Coastside

March 2024

## 'NOBODY TAKES OUR HEALTH INSURANCE IN OUR AREA'

Rachelle Ortua was pregnant last year when Seton unveiled a new health plan before open enrollment.

"They told me nothing was changing," said the central service tech who has worked at Seton Medical Center for the past 10 years.

Her daughter, Kahlani, was born in September and when Rachelle received her insurance card, she assumed everything would be the same.

But when she took Kahlani to get her vaccines at the South Bay hospital where she was born, the hospital couldn't even find her insurance coverage.

"They told me I would have to pay out-of-pocket for the appointment, which came to about \$280, and they didn't even know how much her vaccinations could cost," Rachelle said.



Rachel Ortua with her daughter Kahlani and her partner, Vesna Phuong.

In the end, the pediatrician only did a checkup and canceled the appointment so Rachelle didn't have to pay for it.

"It's stressful. I live with chronic asthma, and I'm afraid that she's going to have the same

problems that I do," Rachelle said. "If something happens to her, how am I supposed to care for my daughter when I don't have coverage? It sends panic in my head."

"They haven't really raised our salaries and they changed our health insurance, not taking into consideration many people who don't live in the area. How fair is that?"

Like many of our fellow Seton employees who don't live near the Daly City hospital, Rachelle is severely impacted by AHMC's recent unilateral decision to scrap its traditional health plan and impose a new plan on workers that is severely limited in terms of participating doctors and hospitals.

NUHW members have filed multiple grievances and ULPs (Unfair Labor Practices) against the employer for its failure to bargain over these healthcare changes. They will go into arbitration soon.

In the meantime, Rachelle is traveling nearly an hour to see an assigned pediatrician in

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## SERVICE & TECH CONTRACT NEGOTIATION: WAGES AND BENEFITS PLAN STILL ON THE TABLE

Since we started bargaining in October, we have reached tentative agreements on everything, except for wages and the standard benefit plan.

In terms of salaries, on average, we are 11 percent behind market wages for similar and geographically-located hospitals.

Our latest wage proposal to bring parity with those facilities includes hikes of 11 percent in the first year and 7 percent in the two following years, plus additional market-rate adjustments for those classifications that are further behind.



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# Negotiations

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Management has finally made a proposal that includes market-rate salary adjustments in addition to annual raises. Its latest proposal is a 6 percent increase in the first year and 4 percent increases in the two following years. The proposal would also include a 2 percent additional market rate adjustment for about 40 classifications in the second year of the contract.

As for health benefits, we recently made a new proposal in bargaining for management to put everyone on the PPO health plan (essentially the former health plan) at no cost to workers, but have not yet received a response. Our committee is determined to make AHMC fix the healthcare fiasco it created by unilaterally changing health plans without bargaining, answering our questions or doing the work ahead of time to avoid unnecessary complications.

## Health insurance

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Daly City she had no idea about until her insurance was rejected. Her daughter received her vaccines three weeks late and she's constantly worried about what could happen in case of an emergency.

"I'm coming to Daly City because I can't afford not to bring her to a doctor," Ortua said. "But if there's an emergency and she needs to be admitted to a hospital, she's not covered. Nobody takes our insurance in our area."

And it's not only her daughter. Ortua's obstetrician and primary care physician—who have offices in the South Bay—are no longer covered by her medical insurance.

"They're saying they're providing care, but if we want care, we have to drive so far to get it," she said.

## A SUCCESSFUL PICKET



Over 200 of us walked picket lines on December 12 to denounce Seton's cuts to our health benefits as well as its refusal to fix broken medical equipment and provide critical medical supplies at the hospital.

Our action generated strong news coverage and was supported by many local elected and community leaders including the mayors of Daly City and South San Francisco, and members of the Filipino Community Center, Faith in Action and San Mateo Labor Council.

### Layoffs

The picket came just days after Seton announced it would layoff 33 workers starting in January, 16 of whom have worked at the hospital for more than 20 years.

Since the layoff announcement, we negotiated a severance package that half of the workers designated for layoff accepted, while everyone else except for one worker was able to ultimately keep their current assignment or transfer to a

different assignment. This shows that when we all come together, we can effect change.

Our committee did a great job of securing six weeks of additional severance per person than management was originally willing to give and securing jobs for those of us that wanted to remain at Seton.

However, our fight does not end here. If the hospital can't come to us with something reasonable and acceptable, many of us are willing to escalate the fight.

Already, 99.5 percent of us voted to authorize a strike if the health benefits issue is not resolved. We'll continue negotiating, but management needs to value and respect our work by offering a health plan that makes sense for all.

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