

 United Healthcare Workers

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Dear 2008 SEIU Convention Delegate:

2008 is a watershed year for healthcare workers in California. With over 100,000 hospital, Kaiser, nursing and homecare workers all at the bargaining table this year, there is a tremendous opportunity to make real gains for workers, patients, residents and consumers.

Breakthrough Settlement at Mariner Demonstrates Power of a Unified Healthcare Workers Union

Just today in fact, over 1000 caregivers employed by a national nursing home chain, Mariner, ratified a groundbreaking agreement that establishes the victories that are possible by caregivers being unified into a single healthcare workers union. The Mariner agreement is a model for caregivers that includes a number of first time achievements in a nursing home contract, including:

- a real voice for caregivers on staffing issues,
- job security,
- the right to organize a union without employer interference, and
- significant improvements in benefits with wages for the first time tied to Kaiser Permanente, the employer of choice in the hospital industry.

The Mariner settlement is a first gigantic step in winning one standard for healthcare workers in California regardless of whether they work in a hospital, a nursing home, or in a resident's home.

But These Gains Are Now Jeopardized by SEIU Leaders in Washington D.C.

Unfortunately, rather than support the powerful vision and success of UHW caregivers to unite all California caregivers into a single healthcare workers union, SEIU is proposing to divide caregivers in this state, for political rather than principled reasons. In almost every other state where SEIU represents healthcare workers, including New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Michigan, Florida, Pennsylvania, and most recently, Illinois, healthcare workers are united in a single healthcare union. But in California, SEIU is proposing to divide nursing and homecare workers from hospital and Kaiser members.

On July 14-15, SEIU will be convening a hearing to determine the jurisdiction of healthcare workers in California. UHW has proposed to unify, while SEIU has proposed to divide.

The consequences are enormous.

SEIU's Vision is the Continuation of Failed Models that Hold Back Caregivers and Harm Nursing Home Residents.

UHW's unified vision has resulted in breakthrough contracts in hospitals like Kaiser, Catholic Healthcare West, HCA, Tenet, and now in nursing home chains like Mariner. In contrast, SEIU, supported by Local 6434, is seeking to return to failed models that benefit for-profit nursing home

operators at the expense of caregivers and residents. In 2007, the SEIU-California Nursing Home Alliance fell apart after it became clear that the gains promised to caregivers and nursing home residents would never materialize. Specifically, even though the coalition of UHW, 6434 and SEIU helped to win nearly \$1 billion in new Medicaid funding for California's nursing homes, the operators boosted their profits without providing the kinds of staffing, wage and benefit improvements that would have produced higher quality care.

Rather than repudiate these sweetheart agreements, SEIU has embraced them. Not only do they give unfair economic advantage to nursing home operators, but they also trade away caregivers' rights to arbitrate grievances, to protest publicly against deficient care, and to advocate for public policy changes without employer approval.

A preliminary report by the July 14-15 Hearing Officer establishes his support for the Alliance model of organizing and the SEIU/6434 approach even before he has heard from a single caregiver.

Fortunately, There's a Better Way

Building on SEIU's success throughout the country and consistent with resolutions passed by the recently concluded SEIU Convention in Puerto Rico, UHW is proposing that ALL healthcare workers should be united in California. This plan is consistent with Resolution 206A passed at the SEIU Convention last month calling for the unification of long-term care workers in every state. That resolution was a mandate to unite—not divide. It just didn't go far enough. ALL healthcare workers should be united; nursing home and homecare workers should not be divided from hospital workers for political purposes.

UHW members know implicitly the power of being in a unified healthcare workers union, and we strongly oppose being torn apart from our co-workers. That's why we're planning a massive action at SEIU's hearing on July 14-15, and we'll be posting live updates from the proceedings on www.seiuvoice.org. We have also enclosed a DVD that offers a window into what these issues mean to California's caregivers—how much we gain by uniting workers and how much we stand to lose if we move backward toward a failed model.

We appreciate your support and welcome your thoughts and comments.


In Unity,



Sal Rosselli, President
United Healthcare Workers - West



Jorge Rodriguez, Executive Vice President
United Healthcare Workers - West



Joan Emslie, Secretary-Treasurer
United Healthcare Workers - West

Tony Aidukas, UHW Vice President
Desert Regional Medical Center

Roberto A. Alvarez, UHW Vice President
Kaiser Permanente - Bellflower

Sonia Askew, UHW Vice President
Kaiser Permanente - Oakland

John Borsos, UHW Vice President
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Will Brennan, UHW Vice President
Olympia Medical Center

Idred Brown, UHW Vice President
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Rosie Byers, UHW Vice President
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Yolanda A. Chavez, UHW Vice President
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Robert Hernandez, UHW Vice President
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Miguel Holguin, UHW Vice President
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Robyne L. Horn, UHW Vice President
Kaiser Permanente - Santa Clara

Gary Jackson, UHW Vice President
Dominican Hospital

Kimberly Jakab, UHW Vice President
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Deborah Kirtman, UHW Vice President
Alta Bates Summit Medical Center

Paul Kumar, UHW Vice President
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