



# Mental health care has never been more important.

And it has never been more in crisis. America is seeing very high demand for mental health care, for a host of reasons. At the same time, nationally there are not enough professionals working in mental health care to meet the needs, and it's getting worse.

## At Kaiser Permanente, we are holding ourselves accountable.

We have invested more than \$1 billion since 2020 to expand our mental health capabilities in California – with more therapists, more resources, and shorter wait times – and there is more work to do.

### **Kaiser Permanente Mental Health Scholars Academy**

We are working hard to get more people to choose mental health professions. Since we launched our innovative Scholars Academy about 4 years ago, we've invested \$30 million to help nearly 400 of our colleagues get master's and doctorate degrees and the extra training required by the state so they can transition to careers in mental health. We are proud that the vast majority have chosen to work at Kaiser Permanente after finishing. Overall in Southern California we've increased our mental health workforce by 30% in the last 4 years – and we are still hiring.

### **Bargaining with the National Union of Health Care Workers**

Unfortunately, NUHW – which represents our mental health care and addiction professionals in Southern California – is not acting in the best interest of our patients. We have been in negotiations with the union to reach a new contract. The union is striking, demanding higher wages and less time caring for patients.

## Who is holding NUHW accountable?

**The union is proposing that therapists nearly double the amount of time they spend not seeing patients.** Currently our therapists have about 25% of their week for planning, administrative tasks, and meetings. NUHW is proposing that therapists increase their time away from seeing patients to potentially 19 hours a week – nearly 50% of their time. This would reduce critically needed patient appointments by 15,000 every month. This is unacceptable for our patients at any time, but especially in this time of high need.

**At the same time, the union is demanding much higher wages.** Across the board, Kaiser Permanente is a leader in pay and benefits. Our philosophy is to pay wages that are up to 10% above market. We value our expert therapists and pay them more than any other large health care provider in Southern California – on average 18% more than their peers earn. We are offering raises totaling an additional 18% over the next 4 years. NUHW is instead demanding pay increases that would shoot therapist pay to nearly 40% above market, an unreasonable pay hike that would make it harder to keep health care affordable for our patients.

We also provide our therapists with generous retirement medical benefits which we are strengthening even more in our contract proposal. And Kaiser Permanente annually pays in to therapists' defined contribution pension plan at almost double the national average – up to 9% of the value of their wages.

**We're committed to doing the right thing for our therapists and our patients,** investing in additional capacity and providing the tools, resources, and time our therapists need to care for our patients.

We need NUHW to engage in meaningful bargaining so we can reach a great new contract that benefits our mental health workforce and our patients. Instead, the union seems set on pursuing its unhelpful and damaging agenda.

For more information go to [kp.org/labor](https://kp.org/labor)