

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF UNIFYING HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN CALIFORNIA

RESOLUTION 15-15

Background: In 2008, the SEIU International Convention adopted a resolution to create a single local union consisting of all SEIU home care and nursing home workers in California. The members of ULTCW, the home care members of Local 521, and the nursing home and home care members of SEIU-UHW were to be combined into a statewide long-term care local. The resolution was never implemented due to the trusteeship of UHW and the subsequent raiding attempts by NUHW.

Since that time, the landscape for California’s healthcare workers and patients has changed dramatically:

- The worst economic downturn since the Great Depression pushed millions out of work, costing them their health coverage, and left others with big increases in their premiums, co-pays, deductibles, and annual out of pocket limits.
- The Affordable Care Act was passed, restructuring public payments to reward healthcare entities that integrate home- and facility-based care and expanding Medicaid (Medi-Cal) coverage to a third of the California population.
- The California Coordinated Care initiative was enacted to coordinate medical, behavioral and long-term care for dual eligible Medicare/Medi-Cal beneficiaries through a single organized delivery system.
- UHW reached an agreement with the California Hospital Association to create a \$100 million fund to improve Medi-Cal.
- The Supreme Court ruling in Harris vs. Quinn created a “right to work” open shop for home care workers.

In January 2015, SEIU International President Mary Kay Henry announced that she had decided to re-visit the question of local union structure for healthcare workers in California. SEIU-UHW invited President Henry to come and talk to our elected leadership about this decision and she declined to do so.

Resolution:

Whereas, SEIU has always been a forward-looking organization that makes strategic decisions based on current realities and future trends;

Whereas, the landscape for California’s healthcare workforce is dramatically different in 2015 than it was in 2008;

Whereas, the healthcare industry is going through a period of integration in which hospital systems are buying or affiliating with home health entities and federal and state laws are incentivizing the coordination of medical and long-term care;

Whereas, our union is most effective when we are structured strategically in relation to our industries;

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Whereas, Medi-Cal is playing a greater and greater role in acute care health systems, nursing homes and home care – at the same time its California reimbursement rates remain the lowest in the country – calling for a unified political approach to improving the program for all three sectors.

Whereas, Harris vs. Quinn has created a “right to work” environment for IHSS workers. Historically, wherever local unions have been predominantly open shop, their membership has declined steeply over time and the employment standards of their members have suffered.

Whereas, SEIU-UHW members have worked successfully to defend our union from mass decertification attempts because we have united to support each other. Home care and nursing home members came to defend Kaiser members in two elections. Hospital members signed up home care members after Harris vs. Quinn, resulting in an 80% membership rate, and Kaiser, home care, nursing home and hospital members all worked together to enroll some 20,000 Californians into healthcare coverage.

Whereas, SEIU has always stood for uniting workers within their industries, and healthcare workers have been united in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota and elsewhere. In the few examples where healthcare workers have not been united in SEIU, such as California, it has been because of internal political, not strategic considerations.

Therefore be it resolved that in the spirit of our union’s slogan, “Stronger Together,” the SEIU-UHW Executive Board calls for the creation of one statewide healthcare union in California that unites home care, nursing home and hospital workers to allow healthcare workers to:

- Become stronger together in a movement that will fight to ensure that no member of the healthcare team makes less than \$15 an hour and that all healthcare workers enjoy a rising standard of living, utilizing ballot measures, contract campaigns and unified political action to achieve that goal.
- Speak with one healthcare worker voice to dramatically raise Medi-Cal rates to end the two tier healthcare system that disproportionately underserves women, immigrants and people of color, resulting in immoral racial, gender and economic disparities in health outcomes, and to maximize job security for those providing healthcare to low-income Californians.
- Unite the resources of healthcare workers to organize hundreds of thousands of healthcare workers in all segments of the industry, including private home care, nursing homes, assisted living, medical groups, acute care and outpatient care, while maintaining a super-majority membership rate to ensure a continued strong voice for IHSS workers.

Be it further resolved that SEIU-UHW strongly opposes efforts to divide healthcare workers in California because it would weaken all healthcare workers and make the previously referenced goals unachievable.

Be it further resolved that all SEIU California healthcare members and the SEIU Healthcare Division should be given the opportunity to discuss and debate this issue, and SEIU California healthcare members should ultimately vote on decisions that impact their future.

Be it further resolved that SEIU-UHW expresses its disappointment that the International President of SEIU declined our invitation to come and talk to our elected leadership about this decision that will have a profound impact on healthcare workers and patients in California.

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Be it further resolved that this resolution, expressing the strongly held convictions of the leadership of SEIU-UHW's home care, hospital, Kaiser and nursing home members, be distributed to the leadership of the International Union and to others within SEIU who care about the future of healthcare workers.