

# NUHW aborts UCSF Children's Hospital strike after management announces 200 system-wide layoffs

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2 July 2025

The National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) leadership unilaterally ended its strike of 1,300 workers at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Benioff Children's Hospital on Sunday. The union called off the open-ended strike, authorized by a 70 percent margin, without even the pretext of having gained anything and only two days after UCSF announced 200 layoffs at other facilities.

This blatant act of sabotage underscores the treacherous role of the union bureaucracy, which is joined at the hip with management and the Democratic Party. The struggle can, and must be resumed, only through a seizure of the initiative by the rank and file organizing themselves independently of the NUHW officials to impose real democratic control over the struggle.

Children's Hospital employees launched a strike against a so-called "integration plan" under which they would be fired and rehired, but with as much as \$10,000 per year in higher healthcare and retirement costs. In addition, dozens of employees stand to lose their union representation altogether and would become "at will" employees.

Hundreds of strikers mounted spirited pickets for a week and a half at facilities in Oakland, Walnut Creek and elsewhere, with numerous engineers, nurses and other healthcare workers joining the picket lines. There was widespread recognition among striking workers that this fight was not simply against one employer, but in fact is part of a much broader struggle that must urgently be fought against systematic attacks on the healthcare system. Including the Trump administration's moves to remove millions from Medicaid rolls.

Attempting to explain its decision to terminate the strike, the NUHW cited an unfavorable ruling Friday by Judge Richard Seeborg of the Northern District of California, who denied the union's request for an injunction against the integration plan, set to begin July 6.

In a June 30th press release, the NUHW asserted, "With no legal recourse to stop the integration from happening, member leaders of the union met on the picket line Saturday with colleagues and decided to call off the strike effective Monday." In fact, they already cancelled picketing on Sunday, June 29th.

This cowardly logic flies in the face of reality. The predictable refusal of the capitalist courts to side with the nurses only underscores the need for the strikers to widen their support in the working class, fighting for more walkouts to shut down the UCSF system and appeal for support from workers across the region.

The end to the strike coincides almost exactly with UCSF's announced layoffs of 200 hospital workers represented by the Union of Professional and Technical Employees (UPTe). The timing strongly suggests that union leadership is consciously attempting to contain growing unrest and prevent a broader, potentially uncontrollable strike movement. Although many UPTe workers picketed in sympathy with the NUHW strikers, when the opportunity arrived for a genuine united struggle, the union bureaucrats were quick to shut the door on united action.

It is important to emphasize that the court did not order an end to the strike—this decision came from the NUHW leadership, effectively overriding the democratic vote of workers who had chosen to strike in opposition to the integration plan.

Highlighting their single-minded dead-end focus on the courts, the NUHW explained that it will "continue their legal fight to try to ultimately reverse UCSF Health's 'integration plan' set to take effect July 6."

The 1,300 NUHW-represented strikers had been working, and will now continue to work, under contracts that expired in April. They continue to face understaffing, wage stagnation and declining living standards.

Yet the NUHW leadership has not organized a fight for a stronger contract. Instead, as stated in the same press release, "The union is proceeding with a motion seeking to compel arbitration over whether the integration violates its contracts with the hospital." In effect, NUHW called a strike to demand a government-imposed settlement.

The NUHW resorted to legalistic arguments to justify its isolation of the strike, arguing that "NUHW-represented professional workers at the hospital, who include mental health therapists, speech therapists, and occupational therapists, were unable to authorize a strike because their contract doesn't

expire until September.” This mealy-mouthed statement is contradicted by the sympathy strike at Kaiser in 2022 by multiple unions. At any rate, the different expiration dates did not drop from the sky but were agreed to by the NUHW negotiators themselves.

Despite the union’s refusal to call a sympathy strike at UCSF, rank-and-file workers demonstrated militancy and solidarity, with the union itself acknowledging that “many had chosen to individually honor the picket line.”

The NUHW tried to direct the strike not as a fight by the working class against for-profit healthcare, but as a pressure campaign on the Democratic Party and on courts staffed largely by Democrat-appointed judges. The NUHW’s X/Twitter page included multiple direct appeals to the UC regents, such as: “The Regents include statewide elected officials and appointees of Gov. Newsom; they should not let the University of California violate our rights just like the Trump administration is violating the rights of federal workers.” The previous X/Twitter post is a Juneteenth greeting from Democrat Michelle Obama.

But the ongoing cuts across UCSF are the explicit policy of the Democratic Party. California’s Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom himself is pursuing budget cuts of \$129.7 million to the UC system, which would result in mass layoffs for healthcare workers.

The NUHW refuses to mount an effective defense of its members because it is far more invested in propping up the Democratic Party. Its 2024 LM-2 financial disclosures highlight this reality. The union reported nearly \$17 million in income that year, of which \$2 million were used for “political activities and lobbying,” or direct material support for Democratic Party candidates.

During the same period, the union paid *zero dollars* in strike benefits—even as Kaiser mental health workers were on strike for 196 days starting in October 2024. To cover for their refusal to issue strike pay in the UCSF strike, the NUHW launched a crowdfunding campaign—raising over \$25,000, which showed the deep public support for healthcare workers.

Originally set at a \$100,000 goal, the campaign’s target was quietly lowered to \$27,000 after the strike was called off. As of this writing, the GoFundMe page remains online, with no update acknowledging the strike’s betrayal by NUHW leadership. Notably, the page still falsely declares: “we won’t stop until we win!”

The NUHW enjoys close relationship with management at private facilities as well, as seen in their participation in Kaiser’s Labor Management Partnership, which funnels millions of dollars in management funding into the pockets of the union bureaucrats.

The NUHW actively starved, disoriented and demoralized its members because a real fight could have jeopardized their relations to the Democrats and to management.

This bankrupt approach line is precisely why WSWS

reporters were harassed, threatened and had security called on them for speaking to workers on the picket line. They had been discussing the need to fight for a general strike and to defend UCSF professor Dr. Rupa Marya, who was fired without due process for condemning the genocide in Gaza on social media. Workers widely supported both calls, but NUHW officials responded to the presence of the WSWS with open hostility.

While NUHW’s X/Twitter account frequently reposts Democratic Party insiders and embraces identity politics, the union has remained completely silent on the UC system’s firing of Professor Marya. An attack on free speech carried out under the authority of California Democrats in coordination with the far-right Canary Project.

In stark contrast, reporters from *The Militant*—the publication of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)—were welcomed by NUHW officials. *The Militant* has openly published shameless, pro-genocide Zionist propaganda. A prominent article at the time of this writing even begins: “Working people the world over have an enormous stake in an Israeli government victory in its life-or-death battle to prevent another Holocaust.” This is being written as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are being killed through bombing, disease and starvation, and as Israel carries out ethnic cleansing with the full support of Washington.

UCSF workers must reject the NUHW’s bankrupt, class-collaborationist politics and fight on the basis of what they need to lead dignified lives and provide high-quality care to patients, rather than what management says they can afford. This must be first and foremost an industrial struggle, not a series of appeals to the capitalist political parties and their courts.

Such a struggle can only succeed through a fight against the pro-corporate Democratic Party and its apologists in the union officialdom. This struggle must extend to healthcare workers across the US and internationally—as well as to all sectors of the working class. In the face of escalating global attacks on workers, the fight to build a mass working-class movement and a general strike is more urgent than ever.

Working people around the world are increasingly shifting to the left, as broad resistance to fascism, war and capitalism continues to grow. This was powerfully expressed in the No Kings protests—the largest single day of demonstrations in US history.

This historic task can only be carried out through the formation of rank-and-file committees and the building of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.



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