



*Transmitted via email at regentsoffice@uocp.edu*

November 14, 2023

Dear Regents of the University of California:

The University of California Union Coalition demands that the Regents take action to mitigate the massive increases to the healthcare costs of our members planned for the coming year. Workers across the state are facing premium increases of more than 20 percent in most cases. For some, these increases will nearly triple their monthly costs. When healthcare premiums already cost hundreds of dollars per month, the massive increases that the Regents are moving forward with will cause real and lasting harm to many California families.

The University has acknowledged in an October 16th memo that it "...will continue to assess medical plan premiums by pay level to ensure costs are affordable, particularly for lower-paid workers." While the sentiment is appreciated, the proposed increases fail to adequately translate it into practice. The lowest-paid workers in the UC system do not have the luxury of simply absorbing an increase of this magnitude. Many of the members of the unions in the UC community represent workers who do not get full-time contracts or adequate hours. The increases on the table mean that many of our most marginalized workers will have to make choices between adequate healthcare, rent payments, and other basic necessities.

Moreover, the policy needs to be considered seriously in terms of its disparate impact on the diverse groups who constitute our community. The damage done by the university's decision falls most heavily on historically disadvantaged groups. For example, immigrants and people of color are overrepresented in the ranks of our community's lowest-earning members. Similarly, there is a large pay discrepancy between men and women across the UC system. To give just one example, there is a major underrepresentation of women in ladder faculty positions, and a corresponding overrepresentation of women in contingent lecturer positions. This means that the effects of the increase will be inevitably gendered. The Regents have both an ethical and policy-mandated responsibility to promote equality in the UC system, and this decision is going to further exacerbate the major inequities that many of our members face every day.

We believe that there is also a conflict of interest in how the university has negotiated the rate increases with the providers in its own system. Given that two of the major plans available to UC employees are based on the UC hospital system, the Regents should have invited a third party to participate in the negotiations over the plan cost increases. The only group getting a good deal here are the administrators of the hospital systems.

Many of our members have told us how this policy would affect their families. One member writes: "My family and I are already barely scraping by, due to expensive cost of living and inflation. We will be forced to cut back on medical expenses, leaving some issues untreated and hoping they don't get worse." We

are certain that the UC does not want to see its members forgo necessary healthcare. Any policy that forces workers to simply live with untreated conditions is of course cruel. At the same time, policies like this are part of the very reason that healthcare costs continue to rise. Instead of getting care when they need it, employees with poor quality, limited access, high co-pay insurance causes people to wait until they face a medical crisis to get treated. This is inevitably much more expensive to everyone involved than simply providing good quality, affordable healthcare that heads off issues before they become emergencies. The UC Regents should commit themselves to being part of the solution rather than the problem.

In conclusion, we demand that the UC Regents stop passing on cost increases to employees. We demand union involvement in healthcare plan negotiations. And we also need transparency regarding the negotiations between the University and its own health systems to protect from self-dealing.

Sincerely,

Michael Avant, President  
**AFSCME Local 3299**

Stephanie Short, Asst. Director, UC Division  
**CNA/NNU**

Constance Penley, President  
**Council of UC Faculty Associations (CUCFA)**

Jason Rabinowitz, Secretary-Treasurer  
**Teamsters Local 2010**

Rafael Jaime, President  
**UAW Local 2685**

Neal Sweeney, President  
**UAW Local 5810**

Katie Rodger, Ph.D., President  
**UC-American Federation of Teachers (AFT)**

Dan Russell, President  
**UPTE-CWA Local 9119**

cc: UC President Michael Drake