

## *An important update from Maui Health*

My first few weeks here as Maui Health's interim CEO have reinforced my belief in putting the value of people at the center of everything we do. Even in the most challenging times, like the current United Public Workers (UPW) strike, upholding the value of family, and caring for our family—our employees, patients, providers, and community—is and always will be, our utmost priority.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide an update on the UPW strike that started on February 22, 2023. I hope to provide some perspective on how we got here, update you on our status, and share our intentions moving forward. I also hope to clear up some of the misinformation being circulated in our community.

UPW represents healthcare workers in departments such as dietary, environmental services, facilities, as well as certified nursing assistants, respiratory therapists, and rehabilitation aides covering all Maui Health hospitals and clinics.

For over nine months, there have been substantial efforts at the bargaining table to reach a fair, equitable agreement. Maui Health and UPW have bargained in good faith and successfully reached agreement between the bargaining committees on three tentative agreements. On three occasions, the Union and Maui Health committees have agreed to the terms of a new contract; but each time UPW members have later voted down those agreements. The third tentative agreement was framed as a Last, Best and Final offer (LBFO) and represented a mutual compromise by the bargaining teams. It too was promoted by union leaders and ultimately rejected by union members.

This agreement included such enhancements as wage adjustments for every member across all UPW job categories, plus three additional increases over three years, the first being paid out within the first 6 months. It represented an average compound wage increase of 13.9% across all job classifications, with many receiving a larger wage increase. Additionally, all UPW members would receive a bonus within 30 days of ratification, plus significant increases to evening and night shift differential pay. This was a fair and competitive offer, and the tentative agreement was highly endorsed by the union's bargaining committee. In fact, UPW state director, Kalani Werner shared with Maui News that "the LBFO represents a significant victory for our members and is a major step forward in our ongoing fight for fair treatment and compensation." (<https://bit.ly/3ZiHL3>)

Unfortunately, even with assurances from UPW leadership that the offer would be ratified, the agreement was voted down on February 21, 2023, and the strike commenced the next day.

On Monday, March 6th, Maui Health and representatives of the Union met in a negotiations session facilitated by a federal mediator with the objective to conclude these negotiations and end the labor strike. The session date and start time were previously agreed upon by both parties. This was the first mediated session since the parties reached an agreement for the third time, which was subsequently voted down by union members, resulting in the UPW labor strike.

During the March 6th session, the Union provided a new proposal that added significant and sustaining costs as compared to the latest agreement we had reached. Unfortunately, UPW's continued unrealistic and escalating demands hinder productive conversations.

At the conclusion of discussions, and upon agreement from the federal mediator, the Maui Health bargaining team notified UPW that they would need to spend time to review and understand the Union's new proposal, to ensure discussions continue to be productive. Both parties agreed to return to negotiations at the next scheduled date of March 14, 2023. The dates of these sessions were previously established based on the mediator's availability. Recognizing the impact on our employees and community, Maui Health requested an earlier bargaining date with the federal mediator and returned to the table on Friday, March 10.

It is disappointing that now false and misleading information is being released to the public, as it is hurtful and harmful to all parties involved, including the many individuals who are working tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure a safe and clean environment for our patients, visitors, employees, and providers. Recent radio and newspaper ad campaigns are obviously meant to put pressure on negotiations but instead instill an unnecessary and potentially dangerous fear into our community and further provoke negativity amongst our employees on both sides of the picket line.

Nonetheless, Maui Health will remain focused on what is most important: our employees, our patients, and our community. We will continue to work diligently and respectfully, in support of all of our people. We are committed to maintaining a courteous and cooperative working relationship with all of our employee unions and will not participate in negative commentary.

Despite the misinformation circulating in the community, we have not discontinued health insurance benefits for our UPW members and at this time we have no plans to implement a "lock out." We will welcome and embrace all of our UPW members back to work whenever they choose to return and have resources available to help them through any challenges.

Please do not let strike activity deter you from accessing emergency care or from visiting a loved one in the hospital. Security is on-site at each of our hospital and clinic entrances, and the Maui Police Department has also been available at MMC's Emergency Department entrance to help ensure those seeking our care have unobstructed access.

We are continually working to secure and deploy additional clinical and non-clinical staff from multiple sources to ensure safe, quality care for our patients, with minimal disruption. Because of our incredible team, we continue to receive positive and grateful feedback on a daily basis from patients who have been in our care during UPW's strike. We invite you to read our patients' comments at [mauihealth.org/mahalo](https://mauihealth.org/mahalo).

We are doing everything we can to bring our UPW-represented team members back to work. Please show your support for our healthcare workers that are caring for our loved ones on the frontline, as well as our brothers and sisters on the picket line. Regardless of union association, we are all connected, we are all family, and that is what makes this community so special.

Please also remember that while social media is a useful tool for sharing information quickly and widely, it is not always a source of truth. Please consider this before perpetuating any potentially false narratives.

For official strike updates from Maui Health, please visit [mauihealth.org/operations](https://mauihealth.org/operations).

Sincerely,

Kerry Watson  
Interim CEO, Maui Health