



The Contra Costa Health Care Coalition Bargaining Update No. 4 - June 11, 2015

The Contra Costa Health Care Coalition Bargaining Team met with the County Negotiator on Thursday, June 11, in what was one of the most significant bargaining sessions to date. The County first provided some information in response to an earlier request for cost estimates based on some hypothetical plan design changes. Although this information was informative and welcome, it remained incomplete, with the Contra Costa Health Plan – a County operation – once again failing to provide information in a comprehensive and timely matter. After being told that the remaining information would not be provided for at least another three weeks, the Bargaining Team responded to the County Negotiator by reiterating its frustration given that upwards of thirty-percent (30%) of the employees represented by the Coalition – as well as their families – are enrolled in the County health plan.

Without doubt, it remains difficult to propose long-term solutions to the unsustainable problem of rising health care costs when information surrounding those costs remains hidden from view. However, despite the County's continued failure to provide information in a timely manner, there remains a desire to move forward and ensure that the Coalition is doing everything it can to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the health care reopener. After extensive internal discussion and collaboration between Coalition unions, the Bargaining Team presented the County with its very first proposal to stem the unsustainable rise in health care costs. The proposal calls for immediate relief to prevent yet another decrease in employees' take home pay as a result of potentially higher premiums in the new plan year. The proposal also ensures that the County will continue negotiating with the Coalition over essential long term solutions: including necessary changes to plan design, a need for fairer cost-sharing, and other structural concerns. The proposal envisions two tracks: immediate relief in the short term, as well as long-term comprehensive reforms aimed at controlling costs while preserving access and quality.

Upon receiving the Coalition's proposal, the County Negotiator asked a few questions before both sides agreed to call it a day. The proposal itself is the result of extensive coordination on the part of the various Coalition Unions – including AFSCME 2700, AFSCME 512, SEIU 1021, IFPTE Local 21, and Western Council of Engineers. The Bargaining Team looks forward to the County's response at our next bargaining session, scheduled for Wednesday, June 17.