



## **The Contra Costa Health Care Coalition Bargaining Update No. 6 - July 30, 2015**

The Contra Costa Health Care Coalition Bargaining Team met with the County's Negotiator on Wednesday, July 8, as well as on Wednesday, July 22, to exchange proposals on how to approach the unsustainable problem of rising health care costs. After months of demands, the County also provided the Coalition with much-sought utilization data for CCHP that has been withheld for months. The Coalition Bargaining Team needs this data to understand why premiums for over one-third of the combined Coalition membership – those enrolled in CCHP – have been rising for years with little justification.

As a result of Bargaining Team pressure as well as rank and file members who stood up and demanded accountability from CCHP at multiple field actions, this critical data was eventually turned over on July 22. The Health Care Coalition requested that a CCHP utilization expert attend an upcoming bargaining session so that the data underlying CCHP premium increases can be explained and understood. On first review of the data, it is not clear why CCHP is as expensive as it is today.

Meanwhile, in response to the Coalition's initial proposal - which called for immediate monetary relief to ensure no further cuts in pay as a result of rising premiums as well as a commitment to continue negotiating over how to reduce costs overall – the County responded by providing the Coalition with a proposal of its own.

The County's proposal would not provide immediate monetary relief, but instead, calls for a 50/50 split of all increases beginning January 1, 2016. While this proposal represents important movement after years of refusing to negotiate over health care costs whatsoever, it does not go far enough: given that we know that premiums will continue to go up, the County's current proposal will still result in increased health care costs for County employees and their families. One must also account for the length of time that County employees have been paying 100% of all increases. Although the County is open to the good idea of introducing a third tier option to expand health care choice, its proposal also calls for County unions to sacrifice their right to negotiate over what plans are offered to County employees moving forward. This too is unacceptable.

After considering the County's proposal, as well as where to go next, the Coalition Bargaining Team has reached consensus: the County must begin paying its fair share of health care costs beginning January 1, 2016. The County's proposal to cover only 50% of all increases moving forward is simply insufficient and fails to address the Coalition's central concern of limiting and ultimately reversing the impact of rising health care costs on take home pay and members' overall quality of life.

Our next bargaining session is scheduled for Wednesday, August 5, and the Bargaining Team is expecting a response from the County on the Coalition's most recent proposal.