



Doctors Council SEIU

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Barry Liebowitz, M.D., President – Frank Proscia, M.D., Executive Director



DOCTORS COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

For the doctors employed by Cook County

Volume No. 1

MARCH 2009

Issue No. 2

Doctors Council SEIU In Action



Clockwise: Dr. Fred Martin (ACHN), Dr. Sonia Lott (Cermak), Dr. Fahmeeda Begum (Oak Forest) and Dr. Marlon Kirby (Provident), some of the members of our Doctors Council SEIU Bargaining Committee

Present at the negotiations table are Christine Boardman, president of Local 73 SEIU, Emilie Junge, Regional Coordinator for Doctors Council SEIU in Chicago, and 6-10 doctors representing the facilities of ACHN, Cermak, Oak Forest and Provident.

Doctors Council SEIU Cook County Members to Elect First Delegates

In the near future, Doctors Council SEIU members in Cook County will receive materials and nominating petitions for nominating Delegates to the Doctors Council SEIU House of Delegates. This is the body that decides major policies and procedures for our union and is made up of the doctors from our union. Each facility (Cermak, Oak Forest and Provident) will have one Delegate, and ACHN will have two Delegates to elect. This is based on the number of members in each area. Anyone who has not filled out a membership form should contact Emilie Junge at 1-312-588-7612 as soon as possible, in order to participate.

DOCTORS COUNCIL SEIU NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE IN COOK COUNTY

Doctors in ACHN, CERMAK, OAK FOREST and PROVIDENT in bargaining for Second Contract

Fresh off the 12.75% salary increases and retroactive payments, Doctors Council SEIU members have continued to press some of their issues in negotiations. Several sessions are scheduled over the next month, while Universal Negotiations are continuing, where SEIU is addressing the issues which affect all county employees, including pensions, health insurance, and cost of living increases.



DOCTORS COUNCIL SEIU FIGHTING FOR OUR MEMBERS, PATIENTS AND COMMUNITIES LOCALLY

Doctors Council SEIU Opposes Cook County Budget Cuts

As the Cook County Board finalizes the County Budget, there have been numerous proposals to cut the Health and Hospital System. At first, a 4% - 6% across the board cut was proposed by some Commissioners. After much opposition, including a letter sent by Doctors Council SEIU, a cut to the County Health System of 2% was passed, with a 4% cut to the rest of the County. Various amendments have been introduced, and discussions continue on the whether there is a need for cuts, given the federal Medicaid money due to the County in part from the Stimulus Plan signed by President Obama. Doctors Council SEIU will continue to oppose cuts to personnel and services to patients, and will monitor the situation closely.

At the Federal Level, SEIU is working with the Obama administration to ensure adequate Medicaid funding gets to the states, and was present for President Obama's signature on the new SCHIP bill.

Surgery Consolidation Plan passed by CCHHS Board

In mid-January, the Cook County Health and Hospital System Board voted to eliminate inpatient surgery services at Oak Forest Hospital. At a community Town Hall meeting after the decision, the community and Doctors Council SEIU expressed their concerns about the loss of these services to the community. Surgical director Richard Keen, M.D., expressed the view that the consolidation would include an expansion of Oak Forest Hospital outpatient services, including podiatry and ophthalmology.

In public hearings before the County Commissioners, however, SEIU noted the need for services in the South Suburbs. "There is no hospital system that will give care to those communities that desperately need health care and a full hospital such as Robbins, Midlothian, Ford Heights, etc.," commented Betty Boles, SEIU Local 73 Vice President, County Division. Doctors Council SEIU has demanded bargaining over the impact of this decision, and will be meeting with Dr. Keen and Labor Relations to discuss the issues.

Consultant Recommends Privatization of ACHN Clinics

Observers, including Doctors Council SEIU, of the Cook County Health and Hospitals System Board meeting were concerned to hear that the firm of Alvarez and Marsal, a "turnaround" consulting company, is recommending that the Cook County ambulatory network be privatized, and merged into facilities such as FQHCs (Federally Qualified Health Centers). Doctors Council SEIU is reviewing the proposal, and has serious reservations about these and other recommendations by the firm. As Doctor Simon Piller, a Doctors Council SEIU member commented, "We have concerns about this company [Alvarez and Marsal]'s track record, and their history of cutting and slashing public services. Their recommendations don't take into account what has happened in the past when cuts in services have occurred, and the lack of follow through by private facilities, who have very little incentive to take our patients. If these patients are sent elsewhere, I think we may see an increase in morbidity and mortality."

Dr. Enrique Martinez, Medical Director of ACHN (Ambulatory Community Health Networks), disputed the numbers cited by the firm in the recommendation to privatize, and provided data to confirm that the actual patient loads for the ACHN physicians are much higher than those cited by the consultants. Doctors Council SEIU will continue to monitor the developments.

DOCTORS COUNCIL AND SEIU ADVOCATING FOR OUR PROFESSION AND HEALTHCARE NATIONALLY

SEIU Secretary-Treasurer Anna Burger Named to President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board



Anna Burger, SEIU Secretary-Treasurer, was named to President Obama's Economic Recovery Advisory Board in a ceremony in February at the White House with President Obama.

She made the following statement: "As daily headlines scream, 'layoffs, layoffs, layoffs,' I am honored to stand today in a new partnership with a president who was elected because he does not turn a deaf ear to the hurts and hopes of working people. He is a president who sees members of labor unions as part of the solution too. The more than 4 million people who lost their jobs this past year and watched their futures go up in smoke don't need more hot air from Capitol Hill. They need fast action on jobs, healthcare, education, childcare, and unemployment."

Dr. Frank Proscia, Doctors Council SEIU's Executive Director, Becomes Part of SEIU's Healthcare Division Leadership Board

Doctors Council SEIU's Executive Director, Dr. Frank Proscia, recently joined SEIU's Healthcare Division Leadership Board. This body is an important structure within SEIU that allows all SEIU healthcare unions to come together and be involved on state and national issues. This board has been working closely with the SEIU government relations and legislative team on the important stimulus package on such vital issues as FMAP (Federal Medical Assistance Percentages).



The FMAPs are used in determining the amount of Federal matching funds for State expenditures for assistance payments for certain social services, and State medical and medical insurance expenditures. The "Federal Medical Assistance Percentages" are for Medicaid. Through increased Medicaid matching funds, it protects health care coverage for millions of Americans during the recession and helps states avoid cutting eligibility for citizens or scaling back services.

Dr. Proscia and the Board also has been hard at work in seeking to have the Stimulus package have additional funding for healthcare employment training, COBRA supplements for those who lose their employment and increased funding for healthcare information technology.

SEIU Keeps the Focus on Comprehensive Health Care Reform as President Obama Signs SCHIP Legislation

SEIU has over 2 million members and over 1.1 million healthcare members. Doctors Council SEIU and SEIU worked together to help ensure passage on the SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program). Over 1,000 calls to Congress were made just before the vote on SCHIP. Over 1,000 letters were sent to President Obama thanking him for his support of and signing this important legislation.

The bill allows states to use federal money to cover children under 21 and pregnant women who are legal immigrants. Under current law, legal immigrants are generally barred from Medicaid and SCHIP for five years after entering the U.S.

The bill also:

- Continues coverage through 2013 for 7 million lower income children.
- Expands coverage for another 4.1 million uninsured children.
- Requires states to offer a dental benefit.
- Allows states to offer SCHIP dental coverage to children whose private medical insurance does not cover dentist visits.
- In addition, the bill generally requires states to provide equal coverage of mental and physical illnesses ("mental health parity") under the children's health program.



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Federal Stimulus Plan to Increase Medicaid Payments

NEW STUDY: A study by Loyola University indicates that working conditions for doctors in ambulatory clinics in minority communities are much more difficult in part due to the lack of sufficient ancillary services (access to medical supplies, pharmacy services, written materials, etc) and more medically complex cases. Do you have comments? If so, send them to us at info@doctorscouncil.com

WHAT ISSUES ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

We want to hear from YOU

Please list the 3 most important issues to you as a doctor that affects you at the workplace, in your profession and that you are interested in locally, statewide or nationally, why they are important and what improvements you would like to see and FAX BACK TO FAX # 1-312-337-7768. Feel free to send additional pages. We will announce the results in an upcoming newsletter.

Name (please print) _____ Employer _____

Facility/Hospital _____ Department _____

Contact Info Cell # _____ Pager # _____

Work # _____ Home # _____

E-mail _____

Issues:

1. _____

2. _____

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