

PICKET

August 6, 2024



SEIUHealthcare.
United for Quality Care

COMPASS

Supporting communities starts with supporting workers:

Our week of actions culminated in an energizing rally



Behavioral health workers across Compass gathered in Bellingham for a rally on Saturday. We started the day at the farmers market to spread the word and get community signatures on our petition.

At our rally, we waved signs, chanted, shared our stories, heard from community supporters, and ate tacos together. We are feeling the connection and solidarity, and we hope that management received our messages this week. We are more united than ever for a contract that will recruit and retain, invest in us, and protect our healthcare benefits.

Words from our community supporters!



"It is my distinct privilege to represent over 600,000 workers in the state of Washington as a vice president of the Washington State Labor Council. I also,

like you, am a frontline worker as I work as a firefighter in my community. Nobody understands the work more than us that are doing the work on a daily basis. We know that behavioral health issues in our communities are increasing. What you are asking for are the things that all workers deserve. Fairness in the workplace, decent wages, and I say this, you shouldn't just be able to afford your rent, you should be able to pay your mortgage. Because all workers deserve to do one job, which allows them to live in their communities, to work in their communities because as a frontline worker and as a firefighter, our jobs are only protected by the workers that work in our community that help support

us, which is you. But we know that corporate greed is not just limited to you who care for those members in our community who are faced with adversity, with behavioral health emergencies. We know that safe communities start with you all. The goal is to treat people before they become in crisis. Workplace dignity should be the rule, not the exception, and it's no excuse to be negotiating for 15 to 16 months for the basic things that you deserve as workers in your communities. Please know that we stand in solidarity with you as you fight for what you deserve, fair wages, safe working conditions and dignity in the workplace, do not quit, do not stop, get what you deserve and take care of those people that are important."

Dean Shelton, Vice President 8th District Representative Washington State Council of Firefighters, and a Vice President of the Washington State Labor Council



"Bellingham has your back. Know that every single person in this community sees the work that you're doing and is going to show up to support you as this fight continues and until you win."

Jace Cotton, Bellingham City Councilmember



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Words from our community supporters! (continued)



"I helped to organize my union at Comprehensive last year and we are in the middle of bargaining a first contract. We are experiencing many of the same issues that you all are experiencing. It's not right that these agencies spend all of this money building new buildings and giving themselves raises instead of centering their workforce and clients. These employers need to do better. So, we drove all the way up here to Bellingham to stand with you and to support you, because that's what you do in a union. Our union is 33,000 behavioral health and healthcare workers across Washington and Montana and together we have immense power to make real change and to change each other's lives, but we can only do that if we stand together."

Mariya Gaither, Counselor, Comprehensive Life Resources in Tacoma

What's next?

We are requesting bargaining dates in August

- Spread the word to the community through our community petition:



<https://1199nw.org/4daYiFL>

- Put a car sign in your car
- Wear a button at work →
- Join us at the Everett Aqua Sox game on August 15 for Union Solidarity Night – talk to a bargaining team member or [organizer](#) to attend



Kirsten's Contact Info:

kirstenbw@seiu1199nw.org
425-247-4874

We're in the news!



<https://1199nw.org/3Yrx6xl>



<https://1199nw.org/3WR2YKP>

We are powerful together! United we can change the behavioral health landscape



"I am a child of this community and have lived alongside its achievements, setbacks, forward motion towards inclusion and equity, as well its tragedies and losses. I'm a first-generation immigrant child to a single-parent first-generation immigrant mother, who was and continues to be, an essential healthcare professional in Whatcom County. In 1992, she balanced a paycheck to raise a child— ensuring that her sacrifice of moving overseas, with little to no English skills or formal education, navigating a society that did not welcome her home upon arrival, would not be in vain. Every individual willing to sacrifice this much only does it for the promise of a better future for their children. Across my lifespan in Bellingham, and only having left to complete my disrupted education in Oregon, I was at a time, unhoused and enduring the unforgiving nature of our limited resources in Whatcom County in my youth. While finishing my social work degree, I promised myself that my social work practice would begin in the same place

where I once needed it the most. Both my partner and I work for Compass Health, and cannot deny the level of sacrifice, love, and dedication it takes to serve the people of Whatcom County— but how, very simply, we can become recipients of the same services that our clients are accessing and that I once accessed in my youth. Poverty, as an entry level clinician, is between paychecks, and accepting the fact that our young, queer family does not make enough money to afford a 1-bedroom apartment in same city I've called home since 1992. I want to serve my neighbors in the way I needed almost 12 years ago, but rent was \$675 back then. Today, per BHA's research, is \$1,480. Our wages are still based on an outdated figure that the clients we serve fall victim to every day, and Compass Health workers are now facing from the wrong angle. We demand living wages, healthcare, and stability that reflects these changes in our growing community— and we will not give up until we can live in the community we serve."

Erick Bipat, Clinician, Whatcom Intensive Outpatient Program



continued on next page →

We are powerful together! (continued)



“What originally drew me to a career in the behavioral health field was my own struggle with mental health and substance use. Not only did I struggle personally with suicidal thoughts and self-harm, I also lost my dearest friend to suicide. He left behind the love of his life and his young son. Seeing that kind of devastation firsthand lit a fire inside of me to devote my life to helping others with their struggles, because even if we feel hopeless or insignificant, we are not. After a few years as a drug and alcohol counselor, I realized that wasn't my passion anymore. A lot of the funding for treatment goes to the most severe cases and focuses less on prevention and early intervention. I wanted to work with kids and try to help them learn skills to be successful and live their best lives. That is when I found my home here at Compass Health in the WISE program in Skagit county. What keeps me working in WISE is the ability to watch children and families move out of crisis and into stabilization and well-being. We provide families with many supports, including the language to communicate about really difficult subjects in a healthy and empathetic way. My coworkers often put their personal lives on the back burner to support these families in crisis, sometimes working late into the night helping children and families in need. Our peer counselors are integral in the WISE process. It's so valuable for the youth we serve to be able to speak with people who share similar personal experiences and share examples of coping skills they have tried to overcome some of their mental health challenges. The family support partners have experience raising their own children who

face mental health challenges and provide a non-judgmental and empathetic space for parents to raise concerns, ask questions, and receive suggestions for ways they can meet their kids needs. These roles are so important, and yet they are paid the least. These are the people most likely to require supplemental government assistance. What that means is that these people who are devoting their lives to supporting families in crisis are working full time and still fall below the federal poverty line. My coworkers and I constantly compare stories of having \$10 left in our bank accounts two days before payday, having to pick and choose which bills to pay each month, standing in line at the food banks next to the clients that we serve, which can create awkward interactions. Most of the people who work in the mental health field are here for a reason. We have our own struggles. I would like to see Compass create a culture of understanding around that, one that will promote healing and allow us the ability to thrive while contributing meaningful work to our communities. We need to hear that we are invaluable, which includes paying us enough to survive. It is important to me and my co-workers to win fair, equitable wages. I want the people who are struggling the most to get the biggest benefit from this contract. All of this on top of management proposing to increase our \$100 healthcare to deductible to \$500! I know I can't afford that. If something happened to my family member and I needed to pay a \$500 deductible, I couldn't pay it. It would go to collections, and my family would be further in debt.”

Charlie Bray, WISE Child and Family Care Coordinator, Skagit WISE



“When I came to work at Compass I was told that an average worker at Compass stays for 18 months. That means their average team lasts 18 months. If you come in as a client in that last couple months of that therapists', youth peers', care coordinators', and family support partners' tenure, you're going to get turnover. I don't know about y'all, but I've had at least four co-workers leave within three months of them starting and others not even start new employee orientation because they realized they wouldn't be able to afford to work at Compass Health and live here. I don't know about y'all, but I also had co-workers who have had to take out of their retirement in order to pay their bills. Compass Health stands on the fact that they will match our benefits and they will pay for our retirement, as long as we're adding to it. They don't realize that so many of their workers have to take that money out in order to pay for their bills. So with that,

I'm here to fight for not only my co-workers, but our clients as well. Our clients are the priority. With that being said, we also deserve to live. We need to be able to afford groceries. We need to be able to afford rent. We need to be able to afford the gas in our cars to drive to our clients. We shouldn't have to decide whether or not we have to take a sick day or go to a client's house because of the amount of gas we have in our tank. That is not okay. And what we are asking for is fair. Tom Sebastian even says on a video that he is fighting for that 15% to give straight to his workers. We need that money so our coworkers can stay for longer periods of time and that we can retain and that we can hire people. And so, if Tom Sebastian is saying that he wants to give us our 15% where is it? So, what we are asking for today is dignity, respect, and more money.”

Mikayla Shea, Clinician 2, WISE Whatcom Cordata

See Tom Sebastian's original message about the 15%



<https://1199nw.org/3WQIj9T>



“Tom Sebastian, wake up. We are the ones who make the machine move. We are the ones who make your paycheck. You know we are right, let your conscious speak for you. We are waiting for you to do the right thing.”

Veronica Garaycoa, Clin 2, McLeod



“It's awesome that I can bring my kids and show them how much we stand in solidarity. All of us are coming together for what is right: we need a livable wage: we have a two-income household but it's tough with kids.”

Carla Smith, Medical Assistant, McLeod



"I started working at Compass 25 years ago when there was no turnover and people loved their job. Everyone felt valued from doctors down to the front line workers. Now they show us no respect and devalue us and pit us against each other. It's heartbreaking for me to hear young people just out of school tell stories of how they are impacted. Management expects us to bring our A game and yet they don't and they treat us badly."

Kristen Foster, MHT, Aurora House



"I'm here today because I believe in the power of our work and the importance of our voices. I was drawn to behavioral health because I've seen firsthand the difference it makes. Growing up, I faced many challenges, and it was the unwavering support of my community and services like those we provide – that helped me thrive. That experience ignited a passion in me to pay it forward, to support the youth and my community in the same way I was supported. At Compass, we're not just any provider; we're often the only provider for youth aged 3 to 21 in San Juan County who rely on Medicaid. We offer services and resources in a place where alternatives are scarce and people face the daunting prospect of getting on a ferry and leaving their homes and their support systems, to seek help off-island. These services are most impactful when people can live in the community they serve. While our clients and communities value us and the work we do, Compass management does not. The current wage structure makes it impossible to retain my dedicated, talented coworkers who make this work possible. In my three plus years here, I've witnessed consistent turnover. We've gone from full teams on both San Juan and Orcas Islands, to a skeleton crew of two people serving 3 islands in our county. There's no plan from Compass to replace my coworkers who left. I am the only person left from when I started in 2021. We need to have a contract with sustainable wages. We're forced to work second, even third jobs just to make ends meet. I, myself, make more cleaning houses than I do providing essential services to vulnerable youth. And when I saw that HR got their \$60k raises last year, when I got a 76 cent raise, that felt like a slap in the face. This isn't sustainable, it's a disservice to us and the clients who rely on us. The legislature changed our reimbursement rates so that frontline workers could be paid more - those raises deserve to be passed through to us. Speaking up in my time with Compass hasn't been easy. Fear of retaliation and gaslighting is a real concern. I've come to realize that our collective voice holds power. We are not alone in this struggle. Changes are not going to be made unless we are a unified front and speaking out about what is happening in the workplace. I want people to feel like they are empowered. Coming here today with each other is an important step to feeling empowered, making change, and winning what we deserve."

Robyn Carbuccion, Care coordinator with the WISE program in San Juan County



"I am here today to support other union members and to let Compass know that we deserve a sustainable living wage, health insurance for our families that is affordable and that hiring wages are too low to compete in hiring and retaining clinicians and other staff. We are committed to serving our communities and want to be respected and appreciated for the dedication and respect we give and provide to our customers. It's time for Compass to acknowledge our hard work and dedication and increase our wages now. Withholding our 15 percent given by the government is not appreciated, when the CEOs and management are getting extremely high bonuses. We are compensated with very low wages, some of us make the same wages as a person living on a fixed retirement income. That's very low. It's deplorable."

Maggie Romero, DCR, Oak Harbor



"We stuck through a global pandemic. We continued to provide services and stability to individuals through wave after wave of an unknown future. We waded into a world of personal unknowns but held it together for our clients. For so many people, we were the sole lifeline they had in a time of isolation. You are invaluable."

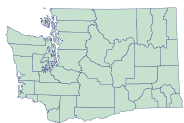
Compass Health does not treat us like we are invaluable. Instead they maintain that some positions deserve barely above minimum wage. Compass Health has demanded high and impossible productivity rates. Compass Health double speaks. They say to our face that we are appreciated but engage in ways that make us feel dispensable. Compass Health knows how to value employees. Management valued themselves enough in 2022 to provide anywhere from approximately 22-50% in wage increases from 2021, suggesting that's their market value. They then turn to us and suggest that our market value is 6% for some positions. Not only does that not recruit or retain employees, it's DISRESPECTFUL. Compass Health cannot continue a strategy of diverting money away from the workforce."

Chelsey Dyer, School based Child and Family Therapist, San Juan County



"We brought great proposals to management that build equity, retention, and will have a positive impact on client care. Management isn't moving but with one day longer we are one day stronger and we aren't giving up. When I was handing out fliers before the rally I came across a couple of houseless folks and invited them. One of them said, 'Compass?! I tried getting in there but they told me the wait was 4-5 months so I didn't bother.' It was an in the moment example of why we need to fight for a contract that attracts and retains workers. The demand and need is high for what we do, and Compass needs to put their dollars where they say their mission is, by settling a fair contract that can recruit and retain the workers our most vulnerable community members need."

Rebecca McClinton, Clinician III, McLeod Clinic



WASHINGTON VOTES

6 AUG 2024
WASHINGTON

WE VOTE FOR UNIONS.
WE VOTE FOR STRONG CONTRACTS.
WE VOTE FOR OUR DEMOCRACY.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 6
Primary Election 2024

See who your coworkers interviewed and endorsed for healthcare workers:



<https://endorsements.seiu1199nw.org>

We are continuing to hold Compass accountable to pass the Medicaid reimbursements to front line workers. These important legislative wins would not be possible without electing champions on behavioral health issues. We make a difference when we use our voices to vote, don't forget to vote this Tuesday!

- ✓ When we come together and VOTE, we can elect representatives who will champion our issues by standing with us on the picket line and in the halls of our legislature!
- ✓ Ballots must be postmarked by August 6th or dropped in a ballot drop box by 8pm.