



## A United Voice for Doctors, Our Patients, & the Communities We Serve

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### **600 Physicians and Healthcare Professionals Win Largest Private Sector Union Election in U.S. History on October 13, 2023**

The doctors, physicians’ assistants, and nurse practitioners who provide primary care in the giant Allina health system the Twin Cities region of Minnesota complained that chronic understaffing was leading to burnout and compromising patient safety.

On October 13, 2023, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in Minneapolis counted ballots in the secret ballot union vote. The doctors and other professionals voted overwhelming in favor of affiliating with Doctors Council SEIU by a vote of 325-200. This vote comes on the heels of another successful vote by 150 Allina physicians at the Mercy/Unity hospitals in March.

“In between patients, your doctor is dealing with prescription refills, phone calls and messages from patients, lab results,” said Dr. Cora Walsh, a family physician involved in the organizing campaign.

“At an adequately staffed clinic, you have enough support to help take some of that workload,” Dr. Walsh added. “When staff levels fall, that work doesn’t go away.”

Dr. Walsh estimated that she and her colleagues often spend an hour or two each night handling “inbox load” and worried that the shortages were increasing backlogs and the risk of mistakes.

“We feel like we’re not able to advocate for our patients,” said Dr. Matt Hoffman, another doctor involved in the organizing at Allina. Dr. Hoffman, referring to managers, added that “we’re not able to tell them what we need day to day.”

Consolidation in the health care industry over the past two decades appears to underlie much of the frustration among doctors, many of whom now work for large health care systems.

Doctors at Allina say that staffing was a concern before the pandemic, that Covid-19 pushed them to the brink and that staffing has never fully recovered to its prepandemic levels. Relatively low pay for clinical assistants and lab personnel appears to have contributed to the staffing issues, as these workers left for other fields in a tight job market. In some cases, doctors and other clinicians within the Allina system have quit or scaled back their hours,

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citing moral injury — a sense that they couldn't perform their jobs in accordance with their values.

“We were promised that when we get through the acute phase of the pandemic, staffing would get better,” Dr. Walsh said. “But staffing never improved.”

Dr. Frances Quee, a pediatrician in New York City and newly elected President of Doctors Council SEIU says that she and her Union are very proud of the vision and hard work the Allina group have shown in winning their Union:

The 600 doctors organized a Union because they have experienced an erosion of their ability to practice medicine, as critical thinkers, as scientists, and as talented and compassionate dedicated professionals

Allina spent untold resources, financial and human trying to convince the doctors to vote against the Union. The wide margin of victory proved unequivocally that this kind of behavior is abhorrent and inconsistent with what health systems ought to be doing with the dollars that come to them from workers' paychecks and from taxpayers in the form of insurance premiums that we all pay. And Allina continues to block recognition of the Union of another 150 of their doctors who voted overwhelmingly for the Union earlier this year.

It is time for the state and the nation to end this kind of behavior. Our doctors and all healthcare workers have a right to a voice on behalf of their patients and themselves as much as all of us ought to have a right to healthcare!

The Union victory here by the 600 primary care doctors coincidentally fell on the same day that a settlement was reached among 75,000 healthcare workers at Kaiser Permanente. Long overdue wages increase higher than inflation, minimum wages for healthcare workers of \$23-25/hr, and commitments to recruit and retain full staffing in all positions, while promoting worker involvement in improving care, such as reducing blood pressures for their patients and seeing to it that all patients receive important vaccines, are all part of the settlement.

So, this is a truly historic day whereby the largest private sector group of clinicians ever has formed a union while healthcare workers are advancing their professions to guarantee that they will be there for the patients and communities who need them.

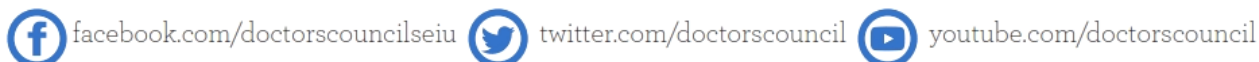
It is time that healthcare professionals be a leading part of the solutions to the healthcare crisis in the nation: to improve access, to improve affordability, to improve staffing, to improve the health of the population through empowered voices from the halls of government, to the board rooms, to care sites, to the clinics. Without the empowered voice of healthcare professional's health care will not improve!”

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Doctors Council SEIU is the oldest largest union of doctors in the nation with members in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Illinois.

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