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UC's dishonest outsourcing

Workers at UC Davis rehab clinic get pink slips

Over the last several years, the University of California has insisted that it is not trying to privatize the nation's premier public university system and our state's third largest employer. It has claimed that it is not outsourcing what were once middle-class jobs in favor of lower-wage contractors.

I'll be blunt: UC is lying.

For the past six years, I have served as a certified occupational therapy assistant at UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento. I help patients as young as 6 months old suffering from brain and spinal cord trauma, strokes and other serious injuries recover and relearn the skills they need to lead a normal life.

I chose to move my family to Sacramento for this job not only to provide for my two young children, but to build a career of public service. My colleagues and I are highly skilled at what we do, helping to rebuild lives shattered by tragedy.

But now, we're having our own lives shattered—by the University of California.

Last May, UC Davis informed me and nearly 60 fellow therapists, nurses and support staff that it would be closing our clinic as part of the university's new \$60 million Aggie Square development.

Our supervisors told us our jobs were being eliminated and we could apply to work for Kindred Healthcare, the private contractor being brought in to operate the new rehab clinic.

There is no guarantee that Kindred will hire us, and at best, we'll see lower pay, fewer benefits and even less job security.

We're not alone. The last few years have seen a steady stream of scandal and outrage over the deplorable conditions faced by



Jasmine Tobin, with her son Vincent, is an occupational therapy assistant at UC Davis Medical Center and a member of AFSCME Local 3299.

outsourced UC workers and the university's relentless efforts to create more of them.

Beyond hollowing out its workforce of professional health care providers, the university is doing the same to campus jobs. Look no further than UC Berkeley, where years of outsourcing its groundskeeping staff left it ill-equipped to stop an entirely preventable loss of life on January 6, when a tree uprooted by a violent storm fell on a car and killed the 32-year-old driver.

Instead of addressing the trail of poverty and human tragedy that its race to the bottom is creating, UC's leadership has repeatedly pleaded ignorance about these practices and issued blanket denials.

My children and my colleagues know the truth. We know that the only thing worse than kicking dedicated care providers to the curb is to somehow pretend you are not.

As a taxpayer-funded employer entrusted with molding the next generation of California leaders, UC is not practicing the principles of fairness, dignity and equality it professes to teach in the classroom.

For workers like me and my colleagues, UC's dishonesty comes at a very high cost.

But we are not powerless to stop them. Tens of thousands of workers, students and others have already raised their voices to demand that UC treat its workers fairly and stop outsourcing our jobs.

Now is the time for California's elected leaders to join us. □

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