

Jan. 28, 2020



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 3

COUNCILMEMBER KSHAMA SAWANT

Dear union sisters, brothers, and siblings in SEIU 1199 Northwest:

My Council office and I, and Socialist Alternative, stand in full solidarity with the thousands of courageous nurses and other caregivers at Swedish-Providence, proud members of SEIU 1199NW, who today are out on the picket lines fighting for quality care and a good contract. In standing up for quality patient care, safe staffing, and racial equity, you are standing up for our entire community.

As a rank-and-file member of the American Federation of Teachers Local 1789, and as a socialist elected representative of Seattle's working people, I promise you that my Council office will do everything in our power to support your strike.

As a socialist city councilmember, I have pledged to accept only an average worker's salary of \$40,000. I set aside the remainder of my six-figure pay into a Solidarity Fund to support worker and community struggles. I'm proud to announce that my Solidarity Fund has donated \$1,000 to your strike fund!

It is appalling to hear about Providence, a \$24 billion corporation sitting on an \$11 billion cash reserve, whose executives have committed unfair labor practices against caregivers, including unlawfully firing workers involved in the union, and who have threatened to lock out workers, jeopardizing the health of the public.

Shame on Providence and Swedish management!

I recognize that it's not easy to leave your patients, especially in the face of harassment by managers who take advantage of your commitment to care by claiming you will harm patient care.

Well, we know who is really harming patient care: It's the executives at Providence and Swedish, who take seven-figure salaries while cutting staff, and telling you to do more with less.

Your stand continues your union's proud history, beginning with the historic 1199 hospital strikes in New York in the 1950s. All across our country, millions of people recognize that "1199" means health care for all, patients before profits, and dignity and respect for every caregiver.

Your struggle is also tied to the bigger fight in our country to kick the profiteers out of healthcare, and win Medicare for All!

Yours will not be an easy fight. Providence and Swedish will try to wait you out. They're counting on you giving up. To win, you have to be ready to stay in this fight one day longer than the boss is willing to fight.

But when you win, it will be a victory not just for the Swedish caregivers, but for the entire working class in the region, and throughout the country.

Your contract fight is also intimately connected to our broader community fight for affordable housing, for the right to live in the city that we work in. Over the years, I have spoken to many of you and other caregivers, who have described moving about being priced out of Seattle, being forced into longer commutes, not seeing your kids as a result, being stressed out.

Earlier this month, we launched the Tax Amazon 2020 campaign to build social housing with a Green New Deal - thousands of publicly-controlled, quality, green, affordable homes available to working class people, from people experiencing homelessness to baristas, office workers, teachers, nurses, machinists, students, and retirees.

We just had an election last fall that was widely recognized as a referendum on whether or not Amazon and the other super-rich corporations in Seattle should be taxed to build affordable housing. And you know what happened!

Today, our movement has great momentum. Just last weekend, 250 activists gathered in the community and voted democratically to move forward with our campaign to Tax Amazon to build social housing. They committed to ensure that the new homes are union-built, with local apprenticeship opportunities, and that all construction is energy-efficient and aligned with the Green New Deal.

We desperately need affordable housing in our community. You may have seen the report just out last week, that declared Seattle and King County must spend \$1 billion a year for at least the next 10 years in order to build at least 37,000 new homes. No, that wasn't our socialist report. It was a corporate-backed report, drafted by the big business consulting firm, McKinsey and Company!

Seattle's Tax Amazon movement stands with you. Let's stay strong. Stay resolute. Stay united. Stay one day longer - and we'll all win!

In solidarity,

Kshama Sawant
Seattle City Council