

From John Nelson, Vice President of Communications, Kaiser Permanente.
April 16, 2019

We find it unconscionable that NUHW's leadership would misdirect the grief and sorrow around suicide and capitalize on personal tragedy as leverage during contract bargaining.

We are reaching out by phone to the families who signed the letter to Kaiser Permanente, and are offering to meet with them in person, so that some of our leaders in mental health and health care operations can listen and learn from their experiences. Kaiser Permanente CEO Bernard J. Tyson also spoke by phone with the Brown family, to extend that offer personally.

We are working to be the best mental health care program in the nation. The quality of Kaiser Permanente's mental health care has been recognized by the California Office of the Patient Advocate and national quality organizations. We've increased our number of therapists by 30 percent since 2015 (more than 500 new therapists in California) despite a national shortage and have invested \$175 million to expand our mental health care offices. Last year we provided over 4 million specialty mental health and addiction medicine visits to our members.

The union's demands at the bargaining table have not been about improving care and access. Rather, in addition to seeking even higher wages and benefits, the union is demanding changes that would reduce, not increase, the availability of mental health care for our patients.

Despite the counterproductive tactics by NUHW's leadership, we are committed to reaching a new contract agreement and have additional bargaining sessions scheduled this month. We value our therapists and are calling on them to talk to their union leadership and urge them to bargain constructively and stop putting our patients in the middle of their contract demands.