

Open Form BOS 9/10/2024



Public Employees Union, Local One

THE UNION FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
ORGANIZED 1941

Mailing Address: PO Box 6783, Concord, CA 94524-1783
Union Hall: 4057 Port Chicago Highway, Suite 100 Concord, CA 94520
Phone: (925) 228-1600 ♦ Toll Free: 1-800-585-0054 ♦ Fax: (925) 825-1812
www.peul.org ♦ info@peul.org

The following statement was presented and read to the County negotiating team during the August 14th meeting.

El Dorado County Employees Association Statement To El Dorado County Negotiations Team

It has become painfully clear that our Board has little interest in being a competitive employer. They seem content with being known as a training ground, a place where talent is continuously churned out and replaced. This is not the reputation we want, nor is it one that serves our community or our employees.

I could present you with study after study, data point after data point, demonstrating how investing in employee retention and longevity lowers costs for employers. But it seems the Board is indifferent to this reality. Instead, they appear perfectly comfortable pouring exorbitant amounts of money into HR-related expenses—workplace investigations, employee discipline, and the endless cycle of hiring and training—because they refuse to hire and retain competent, capable employees.

The Board refuses to invest in its workforce, to do anything that will keep good employees here long-term. And for those who stay, they often do so not because of loyalty or satisfaction, but because they live here and can't afford to commute elsewhere. But what happens when these employees are priced out of El Dorado County? Who will come work here then?

Let's not ignore the reality—80% of Local 1 employees also live in El Dorado County. These are your neighbors, the people you see at the grocery store, at school drop-offs, and in community events. These are your constituents. Yet, while there's always money available for the Board's pet projects or to bolster the Sheriff's department, there's never enough to invest in these very same employees who keep this County functioning. Why aren't these employees considered a capital investment, just as important as any other infrastructure project? It's clear they aren't viewed as such because they aren't treated as such.

It's utterly unacceptable that full-time professionals working for the County qualify for welfare benefits. Nearly half of our classifications—45%—fall into the very low-income category, and an additional 44% are considered low income, totaling almost 90% of classifications. These are the individuals answering your phones, managing your front desks, ensuring that the County's bills are paid, and collecting revenue. They are the social workers and CPS professionals who protect our most vulnerable populations. And yet, these same employees are struggling to survive.

The County's verbal offer of a 3% increase, followed by 2%, coupled with a wage reopener, is more than just insufficient—it's a stark reflection of how undervalued our employees are. For this offer to translate into any meaningful impact, an employee would need to be earning over \$33 an hour just to see a modest \$80 gross increase per paycheck. This amount barely covers the rising costs of basic necessities, let alone fire insurance, making it a gesture that borders on cruelty. It's an offer that fails to address the real economic pressures faced by our workforce and sends a clear message that their hard work and dedication are worth little more than a token increase. This approach to compensation is not only inadequate—it's demeaning to those who keep this County operational every day.

Just yesterday, I spoke with a member who said, "I either need a raise or I need to find a better-paying job because my family can't survive." This employee had to apply for food stamps to feed his children, and even with that assistance, he's still not making ends meet. He shared with me that his coworkers are juggling multiple jobs just to keep the lights on.

This is not an isolated story. We have employees who are homeless, living in their cars, or crashing on friends' couches. They are scared, stressed, and desperate. They have reached their breaking point, wrestling with the uncertainty of how they will manage to cover basic necessities as the cost of living relentlessly increases.

I hear almost daily from employees who are frustrated because another colleague has quit, leaving them with even more work to handle. Managers try to spin the additional tasks they are piling on as "learning opportunities" or "career development," but the truth is they simply don't have enough staff to manage the workload and employees are suffering because of it. Frontline employees are being asked to do more and more; when will it end?

Even after any proposed raise, we will still be far behind the median pay in comparable regions. This is not just about inflation—this is about a Board that has a responsibility to its employees, its constituents, and its community. Without the dedication and hard work of Local 1 members, the County services you've promised to the community will crumble.

The County cannot continue to ignore this wage issue. We need to work toward a minimum pay of \$25 an hour for all employees, with a path to \$30 an hour. If you're not going to pay competitive wages, at least offer a benefits package that gives people a reason to stay instead of stripping them away. On behalf of Local 1, I urge you to do the right thing.

I want to share some deeply concerning and heart-wrenching feedback we've gathered from our members through recent surveys. These voices, the real stories of the people who keep this County running, paint a bleak picture of their daily struggles.

One employee, after paying \$1,850 for rent, is left with just \$350 to cover all other expenses. Imagine trying to survive on that. This isn't an isolated case—multigenerational housing is on the rise out of sheer necessity, with about 24% of our members having to rely on living with extended family to make ends meet. An alarming 52% of Local 1 employees have to work a second or even third job just to stay afloat.

One member shared, *"It baffles me that as a one-income household of four working for the County, I qualify for the very services that I enroll individuals in as part of my job. I have to go to local food banks to provide for my family."* Another echoed the sentiment of many, stating they are *"struggling to make ends meet with two County incomes."*

The housing situation in this County is dire. One employee lamented, *"Cost of living and rent in this county is outrageous. You can't even buy a home for under \$500k. Seriously, who has that kind of money?"* Another employee confided, *"We are homeless, staying with a friend for a year now... My income barely pays for the debts I've incurred like my credit cards just to get through all this. Never mind rent as exorbitant as it has become. We don't even qualify since they require 3 times the rent for income. My gross isn't even 1 time the rent, never mind my take-home! I'm totally at a loss!"*

The situation is so dire that employees are working an additional 20-40 hours a week just to make ends meet. One said, *"As someone who takes care of other humans for a living, the pay is awful. I*

love my coworkers and my clients, but I think about leaving daily.” Another has resorted to “*surviving on small, expensive loans,*” with no savings or emergency funds to fall back on.

The cost of living has escalated to such an extent that basic necessities have become a struggle. “*Fire insurance and utility costs are so high, my paycheck is not enough to do anything else with,*” one employee explained. Another shared their frustration, “*Inflation has caused me to seek additional employment just to make ends meet. I now have to work seven days a week just to pay the bills.*”

The stories continue, each more heartbreaking than the last. “*The cost of every item has increased so much that my family struggles each month to maintain what we have. We defer vehicle maintenance and replacement of worn-out items in hopes of not falling further into debt. Currently, we live frugally paycheck to paycheck. Each month we fall behind financially by \$300.*” Another added, “*With rising food, gas, and housing prices, our family is barely making ends meet. In fact, we aren’t making ends meet.*”

Many employees find themselves unable to advance in their careers due to educational barriers, while others struggle with the rising costs of living in a county where they work but cannot afford to reside. One poignant comment captured this dilemma: “*It is ridiculous that County workers cannot afford to live in the County they work for.*”

One of the most telling remarks was from an employee who said, “*Without the benefits from SNAP, I would not be able to afford my rent, and my family would become homeless as a result.*” This is the reality for too many of our members—working full-time, yet still reliant on public assistance just to survive.

These are not employees complaining about not being able to take a second vacation this year—they are literally fighting for survival. They are your frontline workers, your neighbors, and the backbone of this community, and they are telling you, loudly and clearly, that they cannot continue to live like this.

The County must recognize this struggle and respond with the urgency and compassion that these circumstances demand. The time to act is now.

Our members have made it abundantly clear—they need to survive. They aren’t asking for luxury; they’re asking for the bare minimum to survive. The decision is now in your hands. Do what is right, do what is just, and ensure that the people who keep this County running can continue to do so with dignity and respect.

EDC EMPLOYEE MONTHLY BUDGET (SINGLE MOM WITH 2 KIDS)

HOURLY RATE
\$23.85

Total Net Income

\$2,800

Total Expenses

\$3,210

Remainder

-\$410

Not Included

- Car Maintenance
- Clothes
- Internet
- TV
- Renters Insurance
- Cleaning Products
- Childcare
- Eating Out/Entertainment
- Birthday Parties or Birthday Cake for Kids
- School Supplies
- Debt Payments

DESCRIPTION	INCOME	EXPENSE
Monthly Gross Income	\$4,134	
Taxes		-\$159.75
Medical Insurance (Employee Portion)		-\$773.10
Employee PERS Contribution		-\$343.12
Union Dues		-\$57.34
TOTAL TAKE HOME INCOME	\$2,800.69	
Rent		-\$1,500.00
Vehicle (Insurance, Gas, No Car Payment)		-\$780.00
Utilities (Electric, Propane, Water)		-\$380.19
Cell Phone (1 Basic Phone)		-\$20.00
Food		-\$500.00
Medical/Dental Co-Pays		-\$30.00
TOTAL EXPENSES		-\$3,210.19

From: Jessica Scharffenberg <rucker.jessica08@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 4:57 PM
To: BOS-Clerk of the Board
Subject: Public Forum Comment...

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender

You have not previously corresponded with this sender.

[Report Suspicious](#)

Hello,

My name is Jessica Scharffenberg and I was at the open forum today to speak about my experience at the library. Since the time was limited to 2 minutes I wasn't able to share all of my concerns.

I am a working mom of 3 young children. I am a home owner in Diamond Springs and a registered voter.

The homeless population living out of their vehicles and congregating around the front entry of the public library is a huge safety concern. As I mentioned, my family had to walk through a cloud of cigarette smoke and there was a pit bull and an Alaskan Husky that my 4 year old ran up to and wanted to pet. My husband witnessed 3 drug deals in the parking lot from the time we exited our vehicle to the time we got to the front doors.

I am also concerned regarding the safety of the workers in the government building who have to walk through this environment every day. This is incredibly unsafe. I do not feel comfortable bringing my children to the public library and this is very sad as this isn't how things should be. The families in our community deserve to have unrestricted access to public buildings and feel safe in accessing the services the library has to offer. Furthermore, the workers have a right to feel safe in their work environment.

I am asking my elected officials to not only hear my words, but feel compelled to act and make a change for the better. We need to have a better solution to resolve our homeless population issue in placerville.

Thank you for your time and allowing me the platform to express my concerns. I appreciate it!

With respect,

Jessica Scharffenberg
916-996-0066