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Kern Medical chief managers named in FPPC complaint for participating in making hospital contracts in which they had cognizable financial interests

Visit www.SaveKernMedical.com to learn more.

Bakersfield - In the early morning of Wednesday, February 28th, 2024, Kern Medical workers and union representatives held a press event announcing that a Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) complaint was filed against current and former chief officers of the Kern County Hospital Authority—Russell Judd, Alton Scott Thygerson, and Andrew Cantu—alleging violations of CA Government Code section 1090 and the Political Reform Act.

The allegations are that as public officials, they participated in making contracts where they had cognizable financial interests, which is illegal under California law. It has been almost a year since our union accused the Kern County Hospital Authority of [overpaying two private consulting firms](#) by some \$23 million over the last four years.

SEIU Local 521 representatives alleged that they have uncovered a scheme in Kern Medical's public health system undermining the quality of care available for the people of Kern County while enriching a small clique of executives. SEIU representatives are asking that the FPPC agree to move forward to investigate the allegations listed in the complaint and to get responses from the parties named.

A micro-website www.SaveKernMedical.com includes worker reactions, and primary source materials to the allegations, and discloses the points in time where oversight and authority were rolled back, such as:

- On July 1, 2016, the KCHA board authorized the CEO to open and close bank accounts and sign checks up to \$250,000 without a second signature or prior board approval.
- In September 2016, the KCHA board delegates authority to the CEO to exempt certain Kern Medical officers - including Meridian and Cantu Mgt group consultants - from completing conflict of interest disclosure as part of their contracts.
- In September 2017, the KCHA board dropped the requirement that the CEO provide the board with a quarterly written report of expenditures paid under the resolution designating him as KCHA's purchasing agent.

Kern Medical is the only level-II trauma center between Fresno and the Grapevine. Close to 8% of Kern County residents do not have any health insurance at all, and approximately 45% rely on Medi-Cal. Both populations rely on affordable healthcare services provided at Kern Medical.

SPEAKERS AT TODAY'S EVENT:

- Alex Nazarov, Attorney at Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld, representing SEIU Local 521 workers at Kern Medical.
- Winnie Vien, Attorney at Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld, representing SEIU Local 521 workers at Kern Medical.
- Sydnee Galusha, SEIU 521 Strategic Researcher
- Ana Palacio, Clinical Lead Nurse in the Emergency Department, Kern Medical and SEIU 521 member.

REMARKS KEY FIGURES:

“The public deserves to know why these administrators were able to keep their financial interests in mind while running the hospital. Their job is to create a health system that puts patients first.” - *Ivonne Parker, Clinical Lab Scientist, Kern Medical and SEIU 521 member*

“The way this safety net hospital is being run is something you would never see in the private sector world. My opinion is this shouldn't be how our public hospital is run.” - *Sydnee Galusha, SEIU 521 Strategic Researcher*

“The complaint alleges numerous conflict-of-interest violations by these executives, including that they funneled millions of dollars away from the public hospital to their own management companies and influenced the Board of Governors to retroactively approve these overpayments as routine ‘consent agenda’ items without the need for any discussion by the Board.” - *Alex Nazarov, Attorney at Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld, representing SEIU Local 521 workers at Kern Medical.*

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Service Employees International Union, Local 521 represents 53,000 public- and nonprofit, private-sector workers in California's Bay Area, the Central Coast, and the Central Valley.

Under a Community First vision, we are committed to making sure the needs of our community, and the vital services we provide our community, come first. We believe our communities thrive when residents, leaders, and workers recognize that we are all in this together when it comes to our safety, health, and well-being.