



June 13, 2013

We Support the São Paulo State Health Workers

The State of São Paulo Health sector workers of Brazil have been on strike for more than 40 days now to pressure the state government to open negotiations and bargain in good faith. By law, the state government must begin to negotiate with the health workers' union representative as of March 1st according to a state statute approved in 2006. Yet, the state government has not sat down with employees' representatives to begin negotiations, a clear violation of the law.

Since January, the PSI affiliate, SindSaúde of São Paulo, representing the public health workers of the state of São Paulo, has planned and guided the collective bargaining campaign through regular consultations with workers throughout the state. The union has also delivered its intention to negotiate and a list of negotiable items for discussion. However, the government has said much with respect to negotiating, but has yet to sit down with the union to negotiate.

Health workers are indignant and provoked by the state government to carry out a strike on May 1st that included the state's Legislative Assembly on June 4th. For years, the state government has not granted real wage increases. Indeed, despite the restructuring of positions and salaries conducted in 2008 and 2011, workers have yet to see any results in their pocketbooks and the majority continue to earn meager wages. Currently, the national government pays federal health workers approximately double what the richest state in the country, São Paulo, pays.

Low wages and poor working conditions reflect the state government's policy to privatize health services by awarding management contracts to private firms licensed as social organizations for the purpose of degrading public health services. In the last 10 years the state's health budget has disproportionately been dedicated to hospitals and clinics under private sector control, increasing by 529% while budgeting for the delivery of health services by public agencies, clinics and hospitals has grown by only 198% during the same period. Despite the fanfare for the privatization of health services, public opinion polls regularly indicate that privately delivered health care is a principal source of public complaints.

The absence of dialogue and the state's intransigence with respect to recuperating the compensation of public health care workers demonstrates the cynical indifference of the state government, not only with respect to the workers, but also the millions of citizens of the state who rely on public health care.

We, the American Federation of Teachers, affiliated with Public Services International, PSI, call attention to this current situation and implore the state government of Governor Geraldo Alckmin to begin negotiations with SindSaúde immediately and to bargain in good faith to resolve the outstanding issues and end the strike.

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