

DHHS WORKERS DELIVER 650+ PETITION SIGNATURES!



UE150 DHHS Council leaders met with DHHS Secretary Devdutta Sangvai on January 15, 2026 in Raleigh. (Pictured Left to Right) Rakesh Patel (CRH), Sekia Royall (O'Berry), Peggy Briggs (Caswell), Sec. Devdutta Sangvai, Christine Jiggetts (Murdoch), William Young (Cherry Hospital), Lora Tate (UE staff)

UE150 DHHS Council leaders participated in two (2) actions the second week of January 2026 to demand use of the \$386 Million DHHS lapsed salary fund. This included demands around an immediate \$3,000 bonus, 10% temporary bonus, creation of a Safe Staffing Task Force and advocacy for raising the minimum wage to \$25 per hour.

On January 13, 2026, UE150 DHHS Council leaders attended the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee meeting for DHHS. This committee includes elected House and Senate members who oversee

DHHS. Before the meeting, UE150 members hosted a press conference in front of the Legislative building. During the committee meeting, union members delivered over 650 petition signatures to high-ranking officials.

William Young, UE150 President at Cherry Hospital told the press:

"We are here today because hundreds of healthcare workers are upset that we have not received a raise this year, and yet DHHS is sitting on \$386 million worth of lapsed salary funds. This is not acceptable. We need a raise! Everything is going up. Our insurance has gone up."



Jan. 13, 2026, UE150 DHHS Council press conference at Legislature.

UE150 DHHS Council Leaders Meet with DHHS Sec. Sangvai and DSOHF Leadership

On Thursday, January 15, UE150 DHHS Council leaders also met with DHHS Secretary Devutta Sangvai, along with DSOHF Director Nikki Ashmont, Karen Burkes, and other DHHS officials.

In addition to delivering our petitions, this was a high-level meeting where UE150 put forth the following proposals:



1. Communication strategy

- A. Quarterly meeting between UE 150 leadership and DSOHF Director.
- B. Yearly site visits by DHHS leadership where they will hold meetings with frontline workers without the presence of supervisors.
- C. Help UE 150 with facilitating meet and confers with CEOs.
- D. Authorize access to new employee orientation in addition to monthly access for union meetings.



2. Raises - Audit revealed significant money in the lapsed salary fund

- A. Presented petitions demanding an immediate \$3000 bonus to all active employees without exceptions.
- B. 10% temporary pay raise to high vacancy positions
- C. Paychecks every 2 weeks instead of monthly.
- D. Advocate to the legislature for a \$25 minimum wage and 20% salary increase for all employees.
- E. Institute a 7-year Step Pay Plan.



3. Safety issues

- A. Recognition that patient characteristics are changing.
- B. Improved training for new hires and annual trainings
- C. Enhance safety protocols given the high rate of ITP patients.
- D. More visible law enforcement presence.
- E. Metal detectors at visitor entrances
- F. Separation of patient with forensics charges from IVC patients.
- G. Instituting a zero-tolerance policy for physical violence perpetrated upon health care workers.
- H. DSOHF create a Safe Staffing Task Force



Sekia Royall delivers petition signatures to DHHS. Sec. Sangvai and Nikki Ashmont, DSOHF Director on Jan 15.



4. Workplace culture

- A. Recognition that significant improvements are needed to create and sustain healthier workplaces with true safety cultures. We need workplaces without bullying or retaliation.
- B. Create a yearly feedback system where workers can anonymously evaluate their supervisor.
- C. Stay Interviews (This will provide valuable feedback)
- D. A grievance procedure for reporting incidents of supervisor bullying.
- E. Institute a more effective method than HR (ombudsman) to investigate repetitive violations of hospital policy by supervisors. Well-known bullies should not be allowed to thrive.

Secretary Sangvai listened intently to these proposals. He was especially interested in creating a workplace with zero tolerance for workplace bullying and in pursuing the creation of a Safe Staffing Task Force. ***Workers must stay active in their workplaces and in the union so we can achieve these needed changes!***



DHHS WORKERS SPEAK OUT FOR SAFE STAFFING, & A REAL RAISE!!

The following are quotes from DHHS UE150 union worker leaders during the January 15, 2026 meeting with DHHS Secretary Sangvai and DSOHF Director Ashmont.



FAMILY-SUPPORTING WAGES

Peggy Briggs, Caswell Center, UE150 DHHS Council Chair

“ We represent the most vulnerable individuals. I have been there 28 years. We used to receive merit bonuses. Now everything is changing. We need a \$3,000 bonus with no strings attached. For someone to have a written warning and be knocked out of bonuses, even though they have given 15-20 years, that is not fair. We need a raise to \$25 per hour minimum and 20% for all DHHS workers. There is no reason a state employee should work a second job. We are losing people to private facilities and factories because they are paid better than us.



SAFETY & CHANGING PATIENTS CHARACTERISTICS

Rakesh Patel, Central Regional Hospital, UE150 Chapter President

“ 70% of our patients are coming in from jail. There forensics patients are placed on the same units as our community mental health patients. This creates safety issues for both patients and staff. UE 150 has always strived for Safety, Fairness, and Excellence, providing the best care possible. We are worried about the census at the hospital. There are not enough staff CNA's or RN's. We have shared our concerns with the legislature. Some of them are not as committed to the DHHS mission as we are. DHHS continues to spend a ton of money to pay temporary staff (2-3 times the salary paid to permanent staff). This is not a good business model. 60% of RN's at CRH are agency. It is really hard to run a hospital with all that chaos and lack of training. We are hoping to work with you all to establish a Safe Staffing Task Force.



UNION MEET & CONFER WITH FACILITY DIRECTORS

William Young, Cherry Hospital, UE150 Local Vice President

“ We are requesting quarterly meetings between UE 150 leadership and DSOHF Director. We also need help with facilitating UE150 meet and confers with CEOs. Cherry Hospital is currently denying our requests, violating DHHS policy. We would also like you to authorize access to the new employee orientations in addition to monthly access for union meetings.



FAMILY-SUPPORTING WAGES

Sekia Royall, O'Berry Center

“ Workers are frustrated. We keep getting the end of the stick. We do not have a state budget, and state workers have not received any raise this year. That is why we can't keep people. We collected over 600 signatures from DHHS workers across the state on our petition demanding the use of the \$386 million in lapsed salary fund to pay us now!

UE150 AND COMMUNITY WIN! STATE DIVESTS PENSION FROM ISRAELI BONDS

Members of UE Local 150 joined a coalition of unions and organizations throughout North Carolina at the end of last year to demand the state divest state workers' and teachers' pensions from Israeli bonds. **After holding rallies and speaking out at meetings at the state treasurer's office, the coalition succeeded in pressuring the state to sell \$6.7 million in Israeli government bonds held in the state pension fund.**

Over 40 unions, community organizations, and faith groups across the state supported the efforts of the coalition. On October 29, workers held a rally at North Carolina Treasurer Brad Briner's office. They then delivered a petition signed by over 5,000 people alongside 37 organizations and unions demanding he divest state workers' pensions from Israeli bonds because, as the petition stated, "The people of North Carolina do not want a retirement fund invested in genocide, occupation, and apartheid."

The petition also cites the declining economy of Israel as an additional reason to divest.

At the October rally, Local 150 member and NC State graduate worker **Katie Boatner** explained the returns on the pension investments in Israel were extremely low, lower than a high-yield savings account. Reflecting on the event, Boatner said, “Some of the key points of my speech were that state pension holders themselves expressed a desire for their pension funds to serve the dignity of people. They are not doing that.”

Sekia Royall, a member of Local 150 and state worker for the Department of Health and Human Services in Goldsboro, NC, attended both the late October rally and a committee oversight meeting on November 19, where she spoke to the state investment board about the need for divestment. She explained during her public comment that the workers of North Carolina did not want their pensions to be financially

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On October 29, UE150 members and many other community groups, part of the NC Break the Bonds Coalition, rallied at Treasurer Briner's office and delivered over 5,000 petition signatures.



tied to the violence Israel is committing on Palestinians.

During the committee oversight meeting, State Treasurer Brad Briner recognized Local 150 members from other actions organized throughout 2025 where they pressured legislators to protect their state health plan. **Two days after Royall spoke at the meeting, the state treasurer announced \$6.7 million had been divested from Israeli bonds.**

Reflecting on the successful campaign, Royall said, “We wanted to make it clear that we did not support what Israel is doing to the Palestinian people. Our bonds weren’t even making us money due to the bad economy.”

Boatner said, “North Carolina has a history of activism in the South and it is important that we keep pressure on our leaders. Without community, large community coalition involvement, I do not think the success would have been as resounding.”

When asked about her thoughts on the divestment, Royall said, “This is a coalition that is standing up against oppression anywhere and everywhere, in Israel and throughout the world. And we won!”