



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public Employees Plan Statewide Walkout September 10

At 12:00 pm on September 10, unionized public employees at state agencies, community colleges and four-year universities will [Walkout for Washington](#) to demand livable wages, safe staffing levels, and respect for the Washingtonians that depend on their services.

Negotiations have been underway since April between the 50,000 public workers represented by AFSCME Council 28 (the Washington Federation of State Employees) and the Office of Financial Management (OFM). At the conclusion of a 15-hour bargaining session on August 19th, the parties remained no closer to an agreement on critical matters like compensation.

In the midst of a staffing crisis in the public sector, OFM has proposed what amounts to a pay cut for WFSE members' 2025-27 union contracts.

In the General Government contract, which includes most state agencies and some 40,000 employees, the state is proposing takeaways that include cuts at 24/7 institutions like Green Hill School and Western State Hospital that are suffering the most acute staffing shortages and assaults on the job.

40% of the state employee workforce has turned over in 8 years due to resignations alone¹.

Tom Cline, the senior systems administrator at Peninsula Community College and a bargaining team member for the Community College Coalition, [sums up the experience at the bargaining table](#), "We're given an impression that we were important, but then they're treating us like we're second members of society."

The staffing crisis looks as varied as the different kinds of work WFSE members do.

At the Department of Transportation, it means more close calls, worksite injuries, and deaths. Andrew Stubblefield, a WFSE member and WSDOT highway maintenance worker [was almost killed last week by a semi-truck](#).

"We have seven positions, and apparently we're not going to fill our seventh slot this year," Stubblefield says, "And that presents a safety hazard for us because we do a lot of mobile traffic control. And whenever we're short, even one person, we can't get a lot of that done. It shows in the number of very close call incursions we've had with motorists."

WFSE members who work in trades jobs will deliver a petition to OFM's office in Olympia that is signed by 1,300 public workers on August 28 at 9am . Another petition signed by over 2,000 public employees in administrative support positions will be [delivered to OFM virtually](#) on August 21.

"I have seen admins request time off during the workday to attend WIC appointments, a USDA nutrition program, because they are underpaid and qualify for the benefits," said Milo Nicholas, a health services consultant at the Department of Health and a WFSE General Government bargaining team member. "These admins ensure that the agency runs smoothly with their

¹ Washington State Office of Financial Management - FY 2016 - FY 2024 Workforce Turnover. <https://ofm.wa.gov/state-human-resources/workforce-data-planning/workforce-data-trends/retention/workforce-turnover> and <https://web.archive.org/web/20201016173043/https://www.ofm.wa.gov/state-human-resources/workforce-data-planning/workforce-data-trends/retention/workforce-turnover>

high-pressure jobs and are the backbone of public health services, yet they can't afford to feed their families.”

In DCYF's Juvenile Rehabilitation division, workers report that the rehabilitation isn't being done. With insufficient staff to provide youth with therapeutic and recreational activities, workers at Green Hill School and Echo Glen Children's Center have experienced an alarming rise in assaults.

In July 2024, DCYF halted youth intakes at Echo Glen and Green Hill School due to overcrowding and is looking to open a facility with more beds. WFSE protested the closing of Maple Lane in 2015 and Naselle Youth Camp in 2022.

Elsewhere in DCYF, child welfare workers are currently suffering under double, triple, and in some areas quadruple their “maximum caseload.” [Over half of DCYF employees represented by WFSE called for the removal of DCYF Director Ross Hunter](#). The Washington State Partnership Council on Juvenile Justice has [renewed that call](#).

“In DCYF, we have seen the Governor and the Legislature add more and more to our workloads, and we cannot continue to do more with less and expect good outcomes for children, youth and families,” said Jeanette Obelcz, a child welfare supervisor and WFSE bargaining team member.”

At the University of Washington and the UW Medical Center, employees have recently started a food bank to help their many coworkers, especially food service workers, who are suffering from food insecurity.

WFSE members in the Department of Corrections Community Corrections Division, who supervise around 18,000 individuals who are reintegrating into our communities, are [moving to arbitration](#) after they could not reach an agreement with the OFM.

“The Department of Corrections leadership and politicians take credit for Community Corrections being a progressive supervision model nationally,” said Community Corrections Officer Jim Furchert, who is a WFSE steward and a member of the bargaining team. “The reality of this is these reforms are unfunded mandates.”

Progress made in recruitment over the last several years has been negated by rampant turnover.

Between December 2019 and January 2024, Washington state has lost more than a third of its medical interpreters. These interpreters are independent contractors who formed [a first-of-its-kind union with WFSE in 2010](#). They interpret for Washingtonians with Limited English Proficiency and ensure that anyone, regardless of the language they speak, can access services through DSHS, DCYF, the Health Care Authority, and LNI. A lack of interpreters has a direct impact on health outcomes.

In addition to statewide walkouts on September 10, WFSE members are rallying in six cities across Washington on August 20:

- [8/20 Rally in Tacoma](#)
- [8/20 Rally in Olympia](#)
- [8/20 Rally in Seattle](#)
- [8/20 Rally in Spokane](#)
- [8/20 Rally in Union Gap](#)
- [8/20 Rally in Sequim](#)
- [8/20 Rally in Bellingham](#)

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[AFSCME Council 28 \(The Washington Federation of State Employees\)](#) represents over 50,000 state and other public service workers in Washington state. WFSE members care for the most vulnerable, keep us safe, protect our environment and so much more. That's why people who work in public service never stop. This isn't just a job; it's a calling. The work matters because it means something to make a community better.