

insight

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On the Cover:

PROTEC17 members from the City of Portland assemble at City Hall on April 1 to deliver a petition to the Mayor signed by nearly 700 of their fellow members demanding a fair contract. This is just one of several engaging events and actions that the new Contract Action Team has launched to support contract bargaining. Read more on page 7. ■

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Karen Estevenin
Executive Director

Keep on moving

There's a heaviness in the world right now. Since the last issue of *Insight*, our country is at war in Iran. Attacks on immigrants and surges in detainments and deportations have increased in the Pacific Northwest, harming families, workplaces, and our communities.

We learned of the devastating news of one of our most cherished labor leaders - Ceasar Chavez - and the abuse and hurt that has been carried by the survivors for so long. At the same time, many of us are in the thick of workplace battles - fighting for fair contracts and standing up for the dignity of our jobs and our lives. *It's a lot.* And yet, the days don't stop. Spring arrives anyway. We keep movin' on.

The seasons - especially spring, with new life that practically hurls itself through the residuals of winter - don't wait for things to feel calm or ready. They just push forward. In times of chaos, heartache, and overwhelm, we must *keep on moving*, too. This was the theme of our recent Regional Executive Committee (REC) meeting in early March (p. 5), and it seems to be the theme for the year. Moving forward through challenging times doesn't mean that we shouldn't pause - rest, recovery, and replenishment are crucial in our ability to stay in the struggle. But when we push through the temptation to stop when we're feeling uncertain, indifferent, or overwhelmed - or, we feel these things and we keep going anyway - we discover how strong, united, and capable we truly are.

This issue of *Insight* highlights just some of the wins that we achieved over the last few months through a resilient "keep-on-movin mind-set" and the power of people doing important work together. For example, PROTEC17 Public Health members helped push crucial legislation across the finish line after years of advocacy, coalition building, mobilizing, and lobbying that allows WA counties to enact funding specifically devoted to public health (p. 11). This legislation - if counties utilize it - will provide a lifeline to save clinics, workers, and thousands of people who rely on public health. PROTEC17 City of Portland members are demonstrating that they have the energy, people-power, and solidarity to keep things moving throughout their contract campaign, too. Their first-ever contract action team has been hosting events and actions to pave the way for a strong contract (p.7). And PROTEC17 members at Pierce County are celebrating a historic contract victory, winning for the first time that anyone can recall, higher wages than their non-union co-workers (p.6).

As a union, we know how to get through hard times. We understand that the challenges we face, more often than not, sharpen our resilience and make us stronger. So, we won't slow down. We'll keep raising our voices, keep taking action, keep organizing our co-workers, and keep movin' on - *together*. And we will win.

In compassion and solidarity,

Karen

Port of Seattle members ratify 2025-2028 contract

After almost 10 months of difficult negotiations, the Airport Duty Managers (ADMs) at the Port of Seattle ratified an agreement on their 2025-2028 contract in February, and the Port Commission gave its final approval of the contract on March 24.

The PROTEC17 bargaining team – comprised of ADM members Peter LaRussa, Geoff Smith, and Harry Gaeth (replacing Tanner McBride after his promotion) – is proud of the deal that includes some exciting changes. For wages, the contract includes substantial increases above the CPI, with a 3.6 percent raise retroactive to May 21, 2025, and another 3.5 percent bump on both May 21, 2026 and May 21, 2027. In addition, new steps 1, 3, and 5 have been added to the wage scale. This means that employees not already at the top of the scale will start seeing increases every year in addition to the negotiated wage increase.

In other wins, the bargaining team secured a 10 percent training premium; an additional personal holiday; an extension of the recall period from 12 months to 18 months; and clarifying language regarding layoffs and the protection of ADM work from interns.

Congratulations to the bargaining team on a job well done, and to all PROTEC17 ADMs on securing a strong contract for the next three years! ■

State members gear up for negotiations for the 2027-2029 contract



During negotiations for the last contract, PROTEC17 members participated in lunch hour walkouts, overpass rallies, and more, like the event pictured above outside of the DOL in Lynnwood.

The PROTEC17 State team will head back to the bargaining table on April 23 to begin negotiations for the 2027-2029 Collective Bargaining Agreement.

In preparation, PROTEC17 State members gathered in March to discuss and prepare for the bargaining process, and to learn about the various roles that members can play throughout it – including being a part of the contract action team (CAT) and the negotiations team. After soliciting interest in joining the bargaining team, the following members were selected to represent their fellow PROTEC17 members from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), the Department of Licensing (DOL), and the Washington State Patrol (WSP): Paul Austin (WSP), Brian Brannies (WSDOT), Jason Clutter (DOL), Rachel Crittenden (WSP), Annette Dinkel (WSDOT), Mike Dyer (WSDOT), Bill Hicks (DOL), Steve Morgans (WSDOT), Joseph Opoku, (WSDOT), and Brandi Wilkins (WSDOT).

Non-economic items will be the first topics on the agenda once negotiations begin this spring. In summer, general- and market-wage increases will be negotiated once the State's economic forecast is released at the end of June. By law, we are mandated to have the contract ratified by October 1, so that it may go to the State's Office of Fiscal Management (OFM) to determine its viability, before heading to the Washington State legislature for a final vote during the 2027 session.

Member participation – from signing petitions to attending rallies like the one pictured above during the 2025-2027 negotiations – is imperative to achieve a strong contract. Please remember to update your personal email address in order to receive updates after each bargaining session. You can also visit the State member webpages for the latest. If you want to help distribute communications and updates to your colleagues during negotiations, please let your Union Rep know you are interested in joining the CAT! ■

Find more news on our website: www.protec17.org/news

Regional Executive Committee adopts budget and resolution to support our immigrant communities



On Sat., March 7, the PROTEC17 Regional Executive Committee (REC) — our union’s policy-making body — convened online to conduct the business of our union. Among one of their most important roles during the winter meeting of the twice-yearly event, delegates review and adopt the PROTEC17 annual budget. In other significant moments of the March meeting, members also approved the PROTEC17 staff contract, and voted to adopt a resolution to protect and support our immigrant communities.

The meeting opened with a welcome and tribal land acknowledgement by PROTEC17 Executive Board President Rachael Brooks. Executive Board Trustee Angeles Ize reviewed community agreements, and Trustee Zori Pruneda swore in new delegates. The meeting minutes from the fall 2026 REC were also approved by the delegate body, as was the 2026-2028 PROTEC17 staff collective bargaining agreement which was ratified by staff in January 2026.

The theme of this REC meeting was ‘Keep on Moving’, which was reflected in

the ‘state-of-the-union’ report by Executive Director Karen Estevenin. In it, she recapped some of our biggest challenges and successes from 2025, and highlighted our union in figures representing our growing membership, burgeoning training programs, and our continually expanding communications tools and outreach.

After a review of the proposed budget by PROTEC17 Secretary-Treasurer Mason Emrys, delegates asked several budgetary questions, then voted to adopt the 2026 union budget, which includes more resources for staff, negotiations, outreach, and professional services.

The delegate body then heard a resolution sponsored by the King County Chapter – and introduced by PROTEC17 member and REC Delegate Brad Moore – to protect the safety, dignity and civil rights of all residents in the wake of threats by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The resolution also calls on the employers of PROTEC17 members to cease all support of ICE in the workplace, among other proactive resolves. After discussion, the resolution was adopted by the delegate body. You

can find an excerpt from the resolution below, and you can read the full text on our website at: protec17.org/racial-justice.

Delegates then heard from fellow members Peter LaRussa (Port of Seattle), Johnny Mauger (Pierce County), Katie Carle (Clark County), Alexis Lair (Sound Transit), Jeannette DeCastro and Dan Morrison (both City of Portland) who shared their work struggles and union victories from the last year. Attendees then broke into smaller virtual breakout groups to talk about what keeps them moving forward when times are tough. After reconvening, there were short political and organizing reports from Political Director Mark Watson, Research Director/Oregon Legislative Advocate Elliot Levin, and Organizing Director Jessica Olivas.

Thank you to all of the REC delegates for a productive meeting! The next REC meeting will be held in-person on October 24. Delegates will receive more information about location and logistics as we get closer to that time. ■

RESOLUTION

To protect the safety, dignity, and civil rights of all residents.

BE IT RESOLVED, that our union will continue to expand member actions and opportunities, including mobilizing for protests and supporting trainings on immigrant rights, rapid response, sanctuary policies, and procedures for responding to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) presence in ways that protect community members...

Pierce County members secure historic contract and begin to build a union Coalition for future bargains

PROTEC17 members at Pierce County have overwhelmingly ratified a new 2026-2028 collective bargaining agreement following months of negotiations with the County. The strong ratification vote reflects broad support among members for a contract that delivers meaningful cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) along with several workplace improvements and commitments on classification issues.

The contract provides 8.74 percent in total compounding COLAs over the three-year life of the agreement through a series of general wage increases. This establishes a clear wage pattern for the duration of the contract and ensures steady movement in base wages. Notably, this agreement marks the first time in recent history that non-interest arbitration-eligible, union-represented employees at Pierce County have negotiated a COLA higher than what was provided to non-represented employees. Establishing that pattern was an important priority during negotiations and represents a significant development for represented employees at the County.

An important part of this bargaining cycle was the attempt to increase leverage through coordinated negotiations with

“I am incredibly proud of our negotiations team for their resilience... This agreement is the direct result of our team’s dedication to crossing the finish line for our members.”

Kirstin Thornton
Engineering Tech III
Pierce County



Pierce County Bargaining Team members Kirstin Thornton and Mike Manley.

seven other unions representing Pierce County employees with the goal of achieving stronger results through a unified bargaining effort. After many years of trying, this was the first time the County agreed to bargain with unions as a coalition.

The coalition bargaining process began last June and continued through months of negotiations. However, in February two unions left the coalition, which ultimately led the PROTEC17 bargaining team to pivot and negotiate a separate agreement with the County.

In addition to wages, the agreement includes a number of other improvements and commitments identified as priorities by members during bargaining. These include, but are not limited to: bereavement leave increasing from three days to five days; loss of a pregnancy being added as a qualifying reason for bereavement leave; removal of the 13-pay-cycle waiting period before new employees may use accrued vacation; and a \$1.40 per hour shift differential pilot for qualifying evening and overnight shifts.

The bargaining team – consisting of Aaron Erickson, Mike Manley, John Mauger, and Kirstin Thornton represent-

ing both the Engineers and Supervisors contracts – is pleased with the results.

“After six months of coalition negotiations reached a standstill, I am incredibly proud of our chapter’s negotiations team for their resilience and the seamless partnership we built with our Union Rep, Brent,” said Thornton, who also serves as the PROTEC17 President of the Pierce County Chapter.

“By moving quickly following the coalition’s dissolution, we were able to pivot and secure a solid three-year contract that delivers a historic win: a wage increase that, for the first time ever, surpasses those of non-represented employees. This agreement is a direct result of our team’s dedication to crossing the finish line for our members,” she continued.

Despite the change in strategy during the middle of this bargain, there remains a strong interest in coalition bargaining in the future. Working together with other unions offers the potential for increased leverage and stronger outcomes for represented employees, and the experience from this round of negotiations demonstrated both the opportunities and challenges of that approach. ■

Portland members form first-ever Contract Action Team to mobilize for a strong contract

For the first time in chapter history, PROTEC17 City of Portland members have formed a Contract Action Team (CAT) to support the bargaining team as they negotiate the next contract. Portland members were inspired by the actions of their fellow PROTEC17 members at the City of Seattle and the State of Washington as they navigated challenging negotiations over the last few years (as featured in previous *Insight* issues), as well as their experiences supporting fellow Portland City unions like AFSCME 189, LiUNA 483, and CPPW.

Similar to our last bargain, Portland members are negotiating with the City using Interest Based Bargaining (IBB), which uses a state facilitator and collaborative process of coming to consensus as a group. While the Chapter had great success with IBB in 2022, this cycle of negotiations comes with several new challenges. City government was restructured in 2024, and the team is working with a new Mayor and City Administrator. In addition, this negotiations incorporates the results of the first complete classification review in more than 25 years, yet comes at a time of more challenging economic conditions. Given the landscape, the bargaining team knew that additional support for communication and coordination with members would be critical to successful negotiations.

PROTEC17 members Jeanette DeCastro and Daniel Morrison stepped up to the challenge and are co-leading the new CAT. They have brought enthusiasm, creative thinking, and a fighting spirit to their roles. With the support of PROTEC17 staff organizers, DeCastro and Morrison have increased the number of members regularly participating in weekly CAT planning sessions.

“The CAT is doing tremendous work organizing our members around this contract,” said bargaining team member Valency Astris.

“We are facing dire impacts due to years of bad elected and management decisions, and our CAT is directly helping us



PROTEC17 members assemble on April 1 at Portland City Hall to deliver a petition to the Mayor signed by nearly 700 members demanding a fair contract -- one of several actions organized by the new Contract Action Team.

show our power at a critical moment,” Astris continued. “I’ve never had as many people ask me about what’s going on with our chapter as I have this year. More people are coming with questions and concerns, and are engaged... We have a long way to go, but we would be nowhere right now without the CAT.”

To date, the CAT has organized actions to engage and mobilize the broader Portland membership that include: button-making parties, coffee and donut tabling events, and a clap-in to cheer on the bargaining team. The member-designed buttons are very popular, and highlight a top contract priority - maintaining and increasing remote, hybrid, and flexible working options.

In addition to these fun and engaging events, the CAT also spearheaded a petition campaign where they mapped workplaces, held text banks, and did a huge amount of direct member-to-member outreach to achieve a 70 percent sign-on rate for a petition to the Mayor and City Council to demand a fair contract. The petition was hand-delivered on April 1 (pictured).

“Our contract action team is directly helping us show our power at a critical moment.”

Valency Astris
Engineering Associate Senior and bargaining team member, *City of Portland*

“Having a Contract Action Team has been fantastic,” said bargaining team member Emily Wilson. “It’s allowed me to focus on bargaining - which can be a lot of very important details - while also being able to plug into fun events like button-making organized by the CAT.”

The CAT is already brainstorming additional ways to keep up the pressure and continue to be visible in the workplace, and are coordinating with other City unions who are bargaining this year to launch “Worker Wednesdays” where everyone sports their union colors -- stay tuned for the details! ■

What is May Day? A history of International Workers' Day and the Immigrant Solidarity movement

Every year on May 1st, workers across the globe march, strike, and declare that their labor has dignity and their voices deserve to be heard. International Workers' Day — or May Day, as it's commonly known — is one of the most widely observed political holidays on earth, yet the United States, where it was born, does not officially celebrate it. Understanding why requires a journey back to 19th-century Chicago.

The Haymarket Affair and the Birth of May Day

In 1886, American workers organized a nationwide campaign demanding an eight-hour workday. On May 1st, hundreds of thousands walked off their jobs. Three days later, a peaceful rally at Chicago's Haymarket Square turned catastrophic when a bomb exploded at that protest, killing one police officer and wounding others. Police opened fire into the crowd, resulting in the deaths and injuries of both police and protesters. Eight organizers were arrested for inciting violence. The ensuing trial was considered by many to be unfair and resulted in the execution of four of the eight men. The trial was widely condemned as a miscarriage of justice, and the Haymarket martyrs became symbols of worker sacrifice worldwide. In 1889, the International Socialist Congress designated May 1st as International Workers' Day in their honor.

May Day and the Immigrant Rights Movement

May Day has always been inseparable from the immigrant experience. Many of the Haymarket organizers were themselves immigrants — German, Czech, and Eastern European workers who brought radical labor traditions from abroad. To tell the history of American labor without centering the immigrant worker is to tell only half the story.



Yet for much of the 20th century, organized labor had a complicated — and often shameful — relationship with immigrant workers. Powerful unions sometimes backed restrictive immigration policies, fearing that a desperate labor pool would be used by bosses to break strikes. Employers did exploit those divisions deliberately. But the response was too often to push immigrant workers out of the movement rather than pull them in — a fracture that served no one but the bosses.

The turning point came in the 1990s and early 2000s, when major unions like SEIU and UNITE HERE began organizing immigrant hotel, hospital, and food processing workers. Organizers discovered that immigrant workers were a crucial part of building greater worker power. They were often willing to risk everything for dignity on the job because many had already risked everything just to be here.

On May 1, 2006, that energy exploded into the streets. Millions participated in “A Day Without Immigrants,” responding to the Sensenbrenner Bill, which would have made undocumented presence a felony and criminalized anyone who assisted an undocumented person. In Los Angeles alone, an estimated 500,000 people marched. The message was clear: immigrant workers are the backbone of this economy, and they will no longer be invisible.

Today the stakes are even higher. Mass deportation campaigns and worksite raids have intensified, and employers routinely threaten to call immigration authorities when workers organize or report wage theft. That is the same dynamic that sent police charging into labor pickets more than a century ago. An undocumented worker who can be deported for speaking up is a worker with no power, and a worker with no power drags down standards for everyone. Deportation is, in a very real sense, the ultimate union-busting tool.

Why May Day Still Matters for Labor Unions

May Day is an annual reminder of what collective action has won — the eight-hour workday, the weekend, child labor laws, the minimum wage — and a rallying point in an era of low union membership and renewed attacks on workers' rights. It challenges unions to keep broadening their vision: the incorporation of immigrant workers is not just a moral imperative, it is a strategic necessity. When unions march on May Day alongside immigrant rights advocates, they affirm that labor solidarity means solidarity for all workers, documented or not.

International Workers' Day belongs to the immigrant and the native-born, the union member and the unorganized, the past and the future. On May 1st, the world remembers that the fight for dignity never truly ends — and that it is always strongest when waged together.

Stand together on May 1!

There are many May Day events happening throughout our region, including the large rally and march in Seattle starting at 12 p.m. on Fri., May 1 at Cal Anderson Park (poster pictured, this page). Check the PROTEC17 website (protec17.org) and our member portal (members.protec17.org) to find other May Day events in your area! ■

PROTEC17 EVENT CALENDAR

APRIL

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

- April 1: Steward Training - Part 1
- April 2: Future of Work Member Action Committee Meeting
- April 7: PROTEC17 Presents - Union 101!
- April 7: Portland Chapter Meeting
- April 8: Steward Training - Part 2
- April 8: WSDOT Chapter Meeting
- April 8: Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- April 9: Seattle Chapter Meeting
- April 16: King County Steward Meeting
- April 16: Snohomish County Chapter Meeting
- April 22: Portland Chapter Meeting
- April 22: King County Chapter Meeting
- April 22: Seattle Steward Meeting
- April 30: Sound Transit Contract Action Team Meeting

MAY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

May 1: International Workers' Day!

- May 5: Portland Chapter Meeting
- May 6: Steward Training - Part 1
- May 6: WA DOL Revenue Auditors Meeting
- May 13: Steward Training - Part 2
- May 13: WSDOT Chapter Meeting
- May 13: Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- May 14: Seattle Chapter Meeting
- May 20: Portland Chapter Meeting
- May 21: King County Steward Meeting

May 25: Memorial Day

- May 27: King County Chapter Meeting
- May 28: Seattle Steward Meeting
- May 28: Sound Transit Contract Action Team Meeting

JUNE

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

- June 2: Portland Chapter Meeting
- June 3: Steward Training - Part 1
- June 10: Steward Training - Part 2
- June 10: WSDOT Chapter Meeting
- June 10: Tacoma Chapter Meeting
- June 11: Seattle Chapter Meeting
- June 17: Portland Chapter Meeting
- June 18: King County Steward Meeting
- June 18: Snohomish County Chapter Meeting
- June 19: Juneteenth/Freedom Day
- June 24: King County Chapter Meeting
- June 25: Seattle Steward Meeting
- June 25: Sound Transit Contract Action Team Meeting

This is not an exhaustive list of events, as things get added all the time! Please visit protec17.org/events/ for current listings and logistics.

2026 WA and OR legislative session wrap up

On what was a challenging fiscal and policy environment in both the Washington and Oregon legislative sessions, PROTEC17 was able to successfully advance many items on our political policy agenda that focused on protecting workers, strengthening public services, and building long-term stability for the communities we serve.

Washington

In the 2026 session in Washington state, lawmakers acted on nearly all of the core priorities we identified at the start of the session, securing big wins for public health funding, social housing, progressive revenue, and more.

The passage of House Bill (HB) 2442 was a major win for public health and local government flexibility, allowing counties greater discretion in how public health clinic funding is structured and sustained. You can read more about this huge win for PROTEC17 members and all of the work that was involved on the next page.

Some progress was also made this session on broader workforce stability issues, including HB 1687, a pro-housing measure that expands the ability of state and local governments to site and support social housing by adding it as a qualifying use under the Housing Cooperation Law. In addition, the Legislature passed the millionaire's tax, a major victory that advances progressive revenue and helps protect essential public services and public sector jobs without resorting to cuts or layoffs.

One of the PROTEC17 priorities that did not advance this session was our effort to ensure workers have a voice in how artificial intelligence (AI) is implemented in public sector workplaces. Had it passed, HB 1622 / SB 5422 would have made the deployment of AI a mandatory subject of collective bargaining when it affects employment. While

disappointing, this effort elevated critical concerns about transparency, job protections, and professional discretion as AI use expands. PROTEC17 remains committed to this issue and will continue building momentum to ensure technology strengthens – rather than undermines – public services and the workers who deliver them.

If you have any questions about the legislative session, want to get more involved with future efforts in Olympia, or want to learn more about other ways to become more politically active, please reach out to PROTEC17 Political Director Mark Watson, at mark@protec17.org.

Oregon

The 2026 Oregon legislative session drew to a close in early March after a short five-week session. Despite the tight timeline, several issues important to PROTEC17 members were addressed, with staff and members giving feedback and participating in discussions with legislators throughout the session.

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI) is tasked with enforcing rules on wages, hours, and working conditions across the state, which includes the critical work of conducting investigations, negotiating settlements, and pursuing corrective action. However, the budget for BOLI has long left the agency understaffed, which has led to long wait times on this important work. This year, the Oregon legislature took important steps to shore up the BOLI budget, acknowledging the truth that the mere existence of rules protecting workers is meaningless if these rules are not enforced.

PROTEC17 also signed on to a package of immigrants' rights bills that was assembled for the 2026 session, many of which were in response to the Federal actions in Portland and elsewhere earlier this year.

Bills that passed include a ban on most uses of masks by law enforcement; protections for patients in hospitals against adverse immigration actions during their treatments; and rules changes about the admissibility of immigration status as evidence in court proceedings. PROTEC17 remains committed to supporting future bills and efforts to defend our communities and neighbors against harmful anti-immigrant actions.

Another issue we are monitoring at the local and State level is the push to increase construction development through the “streamlining” of the permitting process. While such efforts often aspire to make permitting an easier process for applicants, we have seen that, in practice, they result in mandated timelines and increased administrative burden for PROTEC17 members who work in permitting at the City of Portland. We have been engaging in conversations around this issue with other labor unions in an attempt to raise awareness of the critical work our members do, and to suggest alternatives that do not have negative impacts on permitting staff.

Finally, while most of the conversation this session around transportation funding centered around reallocations to the Oregon Department of Transportation, we continue to monitor this issue as it impacts our Portland Bureau of Transportation members who are funded primarily through fuel taxes. Pending court decisions, it appears likely that Oregon voters will decide on the future of the transportation revenue package on the upcoming May 2026 ballot. PROTEC17 will seek to provide support for this ballot measure whenever it reaches voters.

For more information about the Oregon legislative session or to get involved in our Oregon political program, please contact PROTEC17 Legislative Advocate Elliot Levin at elliott@protec17.org. ■

Learn more about the 2026 legislative session on our website at:
protec17.org/legislative-priorities

After years-long push led by PROTEC17, counties in WA now have the ability to fund Public Health locally

For years, Public Health in Washington State has been chronically underfunded due to its reliance on precarious funding sources tied to our state's upside down tax code. In the last decade, clinics and services throughout the state have had to shut their doors due to deep cuts, which has impacted PROTEC17 members and jobs, as well as the communities they serve.

In early 2024, funding in King County – the state's largest public health network – reached a critical point where clinics that serve some of our most vulnerable neighbors were under threat of complete closure. At that time, PROTEC17 created and led a coalition of unions and community groups, under the moniker 'Save Public Health', to secure the funding needed to keep the clinics open through a temporary tie to funds at Harborview Medical Center.

Knowing that this was not a permanent solution, PROTEC17 partnered with State Representative Janice Zahn (D-41) in 2025 to try to push through more firm funding during last year's legislative session. While it didn't go anywhere at

that time, the bill set the stage for the 2026 session and a new bill, again sponsored by Zahn, that would give Counties the ability to increase property taxes in support of public health funds.

As written, House Bill (HB) 1870 would provide a practical, locally driven solution by allowing counties greater flexibility in how public health clinic funding is structured and sustained, meeting on-the-ground needs without requiring new state appropriations. In working with Zahn to sponsor this bill, PROTEC17 aimed to strengthen long-term stability of clinics, protect jobs to ensure continuity of care, improve counties' ability to respond quickly to emerging public health threats, and reduce reliance on emergency funds.

While the bill moved through session, it became part of an omnibus funding package (HB 2442) under the sponsorship of State Representative April Burg (D-44) with a companion bill in the Senate sponsored by Sen Noel Frame (D-36) that addressed other critical funding shortcomings, and passed both the House and Senate. On March 25, Gov. Bob Ferguson signed the bill into law.

Robin Ginnis, PROTEC17 King County Chapter President and a Social Worker at the Eastgate Public Health clinic said:

"Securing legislation to create new avenues for funding public health services is more than just a boon to the community – it is operationalizing our values. Public Health intentionally and dependably serves those who have the least options and most barriers. It is also a relief to our members who have been navigating tenuous local and federal landscapes. This gives us room to breathe and more confidently focus on honing foundational services and building programs that are responsive to changing community needs."

PROTEC17 Executive Director Karen Estevenin praised members for all of their work to get this to the finish line:

"Thank you to all of the PROTEC17 Public Health members who have contributed to this huge effort over the last many years! From signing petitions to testifying in the legislature, your solidarity and persistence has helped to create much needed stability in this crucial work." ■

"Securing legislation to create new avenues for funding public health services is more than just a boon to the community – it is operationalizing our values."

Robin Ginnis
Social Worker
Public Health Seattle-King County



On March 25, Washington State Governor Bob Ferguson (center) signs a bill into law that will allow Counties more flexibility to fund their Public Health programs, with PROTEC17 Executive Director Karen Estevenin to his right. (Image courtesy of governor.wa.gov.)

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Find more info and the application at:
protec17.org/benefits

Questions? Please contact Deidre Girard, PROTEC17 Communications Director at 206-328-7321 ext. 130 or deidre@protec17.org.