



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 3
COUNCILMEMBER KSHAMA SAWANT

December 11, 2018

Dear Mayor Durkan:

Your administration recently granted a monopoly contract renewal for Basic Life Support Emergency Services with American Medical Response (AMR), which threatens to put both emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and patients in crisis. I am writing to find out what you are doing to fix the situation immediately.

In August, I introduced Resolution 31831, which urged City departments under your control to include in the City's Basic Life Support Emergency Services contract with AMR provisions that the company:

- "1) Pay EMTs in Seattle the prevailing wage similar to the wage paid to EMTs in cities of comparable size and cost of living, and
- 2) Provide healthcare and mental health benefits comparable to other emergency workers employed in similar sectors in the City of Seattle."

The resolution was unanimously adopted by the City Council. But your administration has failed to uphold the substance of the resolution. Instead, your office negotiated with AMR a servicing agreement that has no provision for adequate wage and benefit standards with the company. As a consequence of the City's failure, AMR has not negotiated fair wages and benefits with its unionized workforce.

In their current negotiations, management is offering subsistence-level wages and inferior benefits. AMR is a nationwide for-profit corporation owned by the global investment firm KKR, with \$176 billion in assets, but it has refused to improve its substandard wage and benefit offer, essentially forcing workers to strike. The workers, dedicated emergency medical technicians organized with Teamsters Local 763, have now courageously called a strike to start on December 21. My office and I stand in solidarity with the workers, and will be joining them on the picket line.

The company's intransigent bargaining position with the Teamsters, made possible by your complete failure to follow the direction of Resolution 31831, is now placing the life of every Seattleite needing Basic Life Support services at risk.

Also, it appears that the City establishment, beyond its failure to enforce reasonable labor standards, has negotiated an agreement with AMR that further enriches the company's wealthy shareholders at the expense of EMTs and the ordinary people who use ambulance services.

The expired contract with AMR required the company to pay the City \$509,000 annually "to cover the City's costs of administering the Agreement..." (Section 11.2 of old contract). That section appears to have been dropped in the new City-AMR contract.



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Additionally, in this new contract, you and the City establishment have agreed to let AMR substantially raise the rate it charges patients. In the expiring agreement, AMR was authorized to charge patients \$580 plus \$17.68/mile for non-emergency transport, and \$729 plus \$17.68/mile for emergency transport. In the new agreement, you authorize AMR to charge \$1,650 for both emergency and non-emergency transport, plus \$23.60/mile. This represents an enormous increase – nearly triple the previous rate for non-emergency transport. Where is this money taken from patients going, since AMR is not willing to substantially raise the wages of the people doing the life saving work?

Your administration has negotiated a sweetheart deal with a for-profit corporation that refuses to pay workers decently, many of whom have been surviving on subsistence wages for years, and is showing a callous indifference for the health and safety of Seattleites. You must take urgent action to correct this appalling treatment of these life-saving workers and the community they serve.

I urge you to join me in demanding AMR reach a fair settlement with its Teamster workers. I also urge you to take immediate steps to build into the Seattle Fire Department in-house Basic Life Support Emergency Services, so that going forward Seattle's EMTs would be directly hired by the City, and can directly negotiate a living wage with the City, so no profiteering company is empowered with a monopoly contract to gouge patients and workers.

The safety of Seattleites cannot be held hostage to corporate greed, and our talented and self-sacrificing emergency medical technicians, who already work closely alongside Seattle firefighters, must be treated equitably and with the respect they deserve.

Sincerely,

Councilmember Kshama Sawant

An equal opportunity employer

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