

Health Care is an Economic Human Right Now is the time for Just Health Care

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So many people are talking about the crisis in health care that State of California officials are coming to Oakland Feb. 7 to hold a hearing about. We at the Women's Economic Agenda Project have seen and felt the impact of the health care first hand. As working and poor people, we have something to say about this.

Make no mistake, the health crisis has a real impact on the lives of millions with no access to quality care. The absence of health care for more than 6 million workers (about 18% of the California population as stated by the 2000 census) is a crisis of enormous proportion and is getting worse as unemployment rises. California, now with the 5th largest economy in the world, is fully capable of providing health care for all residents by taking corporations out of the health care system. As it stands now, America has a very expensive and inefficient multi-payer system. It is much more costly than health care in any other country in the world.

While Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's) have continued to make a profit out of health care for the last 11 years, we have watched our mothers and fathers, sisters, brothers and friends die because they have not had access to quality health care. We have waited in the emergency room for our only source of health care after our health has worsened to a point of crisis. We have worked 40+ hours a week and still not had health care for our families. We have been suffering in silence. The majority of us have had some kind of problem with our health care- we don't have it, we fear losing it, we cannot afford it, we do not have a choice of doctors or it only covers some health problems and not others.

For this reason, we stand unequivocally behind Just Health Care, a proposal for a universal health care system that would cover all residents of the United States from birth to death. By eliminating administrative waste and profit out of the health care system, we can have comprehensive and universal health care without spending any more money. If this proposal were to go through, all residents of the United States would have the health care they need with 95% of taxpayers saving money.

Who would benefit? The employed and unemployed worker, part-time and temporary workers, young adults (ages 18-24 represent nearly 30% of the nation's uninsured as it states in the 2000 Census), the elderly, and ALL residents of the United States (documented or not). Just Health Care includes doctors visits, nursing home and long-term care, hospitalization, preventative and rehabilitative service, access to specialists, prescription drugs, mental health treatment, dental and vision services, occupational health services and medical supplies and equipment. All this for the same amount of money we are spending now. The HMO's have had over ten years of health care failure. In this period of insecurity, the time has come for a change of priorities, putting people's lives before profit.

Health care is an economic human right, as guaranteed to us more than 50 years ago in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We are reclaiming these Economic Human Rights and embracing the Just Health Care Campaign- we can no longer stand by as our family and friends continue to die- we have lost one too many of our loved ones for no good reason at all.