



Universal Health Care and Voices of Faith

In July 2009, religious leaders from a wide spectrum of faith traditions in the United States issued a joint statement in support of health care reform, citing it as an urgent priority “so that all of our neighbors, especially the people living in poverty, children, and the aged can be assured of the fullness of life that is central to the holy vision of a beloved and peaceable community.”

“As we together pursue this vision our direction is certain—it is toward the common good. The prospect of high-quality, affordable health care for everyone is a measure of our wholeness as a nation. We pray that our best minds and kindest hearts might be joined in this effort so that all men, women, and children will have the health care they need to live the lives for which they were created. We stand ready to give our support and energies to its achievement.”*

**A complete list of signers can be found at the National Council of Churches website.*

People of faith led the social movements that abolished slavery and led to universal education, women’s suffrage, civil rights, and environmental protections. People of faith are leading another social movement—to achieve compassionate and sustainable health care for ALL.

WHEN patients regardless of age or insurance status cannot find primary care doctors;

WHEN medical costs contribute to the majority of personal bankruptcies for American families;

WHEN a Medicare patient chooses between life-saving prescription medications and food;

WHEN a doctor’s appointment is put off because the patient hasn’t met the insurance deductible;

WHEN significant disparities exist in health care among racial and ethnic communities;

THEN we, as people of faith, must raise our voices to confront the injustices of our health care system. In our country today, even after extensive federal and state legislative reform efforts, we have a broken health care system that distributes services unjustly and rations care inequitably, based on income. People of faith living in this, the richest nation in the world, have no choice but to condemn the lack of affordable health care for millions of people as a moral outrage. Although the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will provide temporary help by prohibiting the use of pre-existing conditions to exclude Americans from health care insurance and by limiting out-of-pocket costs to individuals, the ACA will not be sustainable. This is because it controls neither costs nor incentives to profit from the illness of others, and it leaves the destiny of our health care system under the control of vested interests in the health care industry instead of the public.

People of faith apply the age-old moral test of a society--how do we treat:

- those who are in the dawn of life...the children,
- those who are in the twilight of life...the elderly, and
- those who are in the shadow of life...the sick, the needy, and the differently-abled?

All faith traditions challenge believers to act with justice, engage in healing, and treat people with compassion. People of faith are called to embrace this faith tradition and declare that health care for ALL is a matter of conscience, a moral imperative for the common good.

What People of Faith Can Do

EDUCATE: Faith communities are especially suited to help members understand our health system and its injustices and the effects of proposed and existing legislation. In compassionate dialogue, faith groups can study the issues of justice, ask the difficult questions, and challenge misinformation.

BUILD BRIDGES: Faith communities have unique opportunities to build bridges and initiate collaboration among various congregations, the business and labor communities, health care providers, civic groups and others. Voices of faith can bridge ideological differences and partisanship.

OFFER HOPE: Hope allows people to imagine what could be. Hope is communal and collaborative. People of faith, people of hope who seek justice, have a vision of right relationships. Hope will not be overcome.

ADVOCATE: Now, more than ever, there is a need for voices of faith to speak out. Help your congregation and denomination actively transform the political outcome and establish health care for all in Ohio.

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