

Testimony of Douglass Turner

Partnership for Coverage Hearing

Buffalo, NY

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I am a NYS retiree. I worked for the State between 1970 and 1999. I was laid off twice in my public service career due to “downsizing” and each time rehired after some idle time because of NYS Civil Service rules.

Millions of workers in the richest country in the world are and have been without health care because a conservative ruling class has successfully made the words, “socialized medicine” dirty in the eyes and ears of the American people. It was for a time a “knee jerk” reaction for ordinary citizens to mouth those words, “we don’t want socialized medicine in our country”, first, as an extension of the belief that government would only make a mess of it; and then as part of the universal fight against communism. The residues of those campaigns still haunt many of us into keeping quiet because we were such easy “dupes” of slogans aimed not at potential bad government or a totalitarian form of government, but to prevent anymore public funds from being used for the benefit of the larger public after the huge success earlier of “New Deal” programs. The majority of the American public wants a national public health care program that will eventually cover every American citizen. We currently have national health care models that work successfully; Medicare and the Veterans Administration are ideal starting points which could be made to work far better if administrations were really committed to their successes. Those opposed to this idea of universal public health care have undue influence in the political system and are promoting the principle that the “market place” will solve the problem. Left to the workings of the “market place”, we do get the most efficient program. Those of us with the “most expensive” illnesses to treat will be denied medical services, to protect the profits of private insurers, and will be left to die ignominious deaths, without even becoming a public health statistic disclosure, “death by denial of medical services by the insurance provider”. A “cost-benefit analysis” will undeniably put a plus in the column of reducing the demand and cost to a health care system with each death that occurs. It used to be a “plus”, counting how many lives were saved and how many patients were treated. I applaud those who have attained salary levels that can afford them private health care insurance coverage and relieve them of the financial worry about eventual, “catastrophic” illnesses entering their families. I even applaud our elected officials who have fashioned health care systems for themselves, the envy of us all. It is time that the hypocrites who have made a better life for themselves and their families, some on “the public trust”, to extend the benefits they enjoy to the greater public. Protect, guarantee and extend health care coverage in NYS. Please start by protecting the gains already made by retired, former NYS employees, as part of our due for services rendered. In retirement, any added costs due to increases in co-pays, premiums, and out-of-pocket medical expenses would make our lives far less a congenial “rest” after years of dedicated service and much closer to a “sentence” to poverty.