

In Search of a Moral Health Care System

by Michael Schuenemeyer

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We are a country whose citizens pledge “liberty and justice for all” and whose government is to be organized so as to “promote the common welfare”. To propose a health care system that places an unfair burden on the poor and the elderly is a violation of those values, but that is exactly what the American Health Care Act does. This is the “repeal and replace” legislation that GOP leaders hope to expedite through Congress in the coming days.

It is difficult to imagine an issue that so profoundly affects each person the way health care does. It is complex, because we are complex and the contexts in which we live and work and have our being are also complex. Each of us needs health care at every stage of life, whether it is preventive services that help to keep us healthy and identify concerns or the myriad of procedures and therapies that address the host of conditions that can threaten our very existence.

Health care is, without question, a basic and fundamental human need. It is certainly equal to the need to access clean water, plumbing, electricity, trash removal, quality education and services that provide for our safety and security and that promote the common good. It only stands to reason that a service so essential to life be something we guarantee to every citizen. All of us together, as fellow citizens, are responsible to ensure access for everyone, regardless of economic status and ability to pay.

To be sure, the Affordable Care Act is something that can and ought to be improved, but the evidence is clear about the millions of citizens who are benefitting from it, not the least of which are the millions who did not previously have health coverage. But rather than working on it together, it has been made into a political wedge that continues to divide the country. America deserves better.

If there is going to be a “repeal and replace” it must improve on the ACA by increasing the number of insured, lowering overall health care cost more than

the ACA already has (and it has), making health care more affordable, especially to those who struggle most to afford it. But the GOP’s “American Health Care Act’ doesn’t do that. It continues to treat health like a privilege or a commodity to be sold at market value with profits and tax breaks that line the pockets of the rich.

America can ill afford to be duped by this dubious plan that House leaders are rushing through without a score from the General Accounting Office (GAO), denying Americans critical information about what their proposal will actually cost. By moving to a per capita formula for Medicaid with limits, this bill will leave states and health institutions holding the bill for the actual costs. Inevitably this will force these institutions to reduce access to care leaving the most vulnerable among us without. Although no federal funds to Planned Parenthood pay for abortions, the GOP plan also defunds Planned Parenthood, which will leave hundreds of thousands of women without health care services they need.

America needs a moral health care system that guarantees access to quality health for everyone, but this plan is not it. Americans must demand better from their Congressional leaders.

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