

Friday, June 19, 2009

Today Amnesty International USA issued the following email alert.

To take action, go to the AI-USA online Action Center:

<http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/siteapps/advocacy/index.aspx?c=jhKPIXPCloE&b=2590179&template=x.ascx&action=12462>

Health Care is a Human Right – Urge the Senate to Have a Real Debate on Single Payer

We at Amnesty International believe that policymakers have a historic opportunity to reform a broken health care system. During the presidential debates, Barack Obama took a step in the right direction by affirming that health care should be a right. The legislation now emerging from Washington is, however, a long way from fulfilling that vision.

One reason the current draft legislation falls short of the mark is that single-payer advocates, a crucial human rights constituency, have been largely excluded from the reform process. While the human right to health care does not mandate any particular type of health care system, of the reform proposals being discussed in the U.S. today, the single-payer plans are more universal, equitable and accountable – the three key principles of the human right to health care. Single-payer plans approach health care as an essential service and a public good. A single-payer health care system would pair private delivery with public financing – that is, with private doctors, clinics and hospitals getting all their reimbursement from the government. Medicare, a well-established and popular part of our current health care system, works this way; a single-payer system would institute an improved Medicare for all.

Two of Amnesty International's ally organizations, the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative and the National Health Law Program, have analyzed current single-payer proposals, and found

them to come much closer to fulfilling the human right to health care than the market-based reform plans.

But the powerful Senate Finance Committee, the single most important legislative grouping in the reform process, has yet to hold a public hearing on single-payer. In fact, the committee chair, Sen. Max Baucus, has said that single-payer is “off the table” – a stance he has since acknowledged was mistaken.

Advocates for a human rights-based approach to health care must be included in the reform process. **[Tell Max Baucus to hold a Finance Committee hearing on single-payer!](#)**

Publicly financed and administered health care should be expanded as the strongest vehicle for making health care universally accessible and accountable. Single-payer is a crucial proposal for fulfilling the human right to health care. Without a single-payer seat at the table, we risk that no one will speak up for true universality and a fair, equitable health care system.

Too much of the current debate about health care assumes that we can talk about health care in the same way that we talk about consumer products. But health care is not about markets; it is about the right of every person to live a life of dignity. In health care reform, human rights must come first.

Though things are moving very fast in Congress, it's not too late to make your voice heard. **[Tell Max Baucus that single-payer advocates must be heard!](#)**

Sincerely,

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P.S. You can always get more information on Amnesty International's Healthcare Is A Human Right project and sign our petition at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/healthcare>