



Press Release

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Presidential Candidates Must Do More to Protect Our Health

Candidates' Health Care Plans Fail to Meet Human Rights Standards, a New Assessment Finds

(New York) – None of the leading presidential candidates have put forward health care reform plans that meet human rights standards, according to an assessment by the National Health Law Program (NHeLP) and the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI). The assessment, based on human rights guidelines for health care reform, recognizes that several candidates have made proposals that may increase insurance coverage, but urges candidates to do more to protect health and ensure equal and comprehensive access to care for everyone.

The assessment addresses all the major candidates' proposals, none of which recognizes the human right to health care -- a right guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted in 1948). Despite significant differences in approach, Democrats and Republicans alike have yet to develop plans that put people over profits and get real health returns on investment. Currently their plans risk pouring yet more resources into the private insurance market, without ensuring these will primarily be spent on health protection, rather than on profits and administrative costs.

"All candidates need to do more to address the immense costs of private health insurance to taxpayers," said Dr. Anja Rudiger, the director of NHeLP's and NESRI's Human Right to Health Program and author of the assessment. "Rising insurance premiums can derail any reform effort that relies on costly services by private insurers and investor-owned providers. It would be far more cost effective to run a health care system according to basic human rights principles. We hope that candidates will make proposals that would genuinely protect the human right to health care for all."

According to international human rights standards, every person has a human right to health. This does not mean the right to be healthy, but to be as healthy as possible, within the limits posed by our bodies and behaviors. The human right to health guarantees a system of health protection, which, in a rich country such as the United States, must ensure that everyone can obtain the health care they need.

"This is a wake-up call," said Dr. Rudiger, "we need to tell candidates to stop treating us as consumers who can choose to buy or forgo health care. When you're sick, you don't have a choice. You have a right to receive the treatment you need."

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The publication is available at http://www.nesri.org/Human_Rights_Assessment.pdf?sku=C8821
or <http://www.healthlaw.org/library/item.176974>