

U.S. Social Forum: People's Movement Assembly on the Right to Health

Agreed Statement of Principles

Detroit, USA, June 2010

As endorsing organizations of the US Social Forum People's Movement Assembly (PMA) on the Right to Health, we believe in these principles of the human right to health:

We believe that health and health care are fundamental human rights that guarantee all human beings, regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, language, income, religion, sexuality, age, or disability, full, equal and comprehensive access to health and health care.

We recognize the overwhelming evidence that the profit-driven, market-based U.S. health system denies us the human right to health care. We believe that health care is a public good and must be shared equitably. It must not be treated as a commodity sold for private gain. Privatization of health care funnels public money to private interests instead of meeting people's fundamental needs. Therefore, we oppose the trend of privatization, including the privatization of Medicare and Medicaid and the inclusion of privatization directives in international trade agreements, and instead seek to replace the market-based system with a national public health care system founded on the principle that health and health care are human rights.

We believe that single-payer public financing of health care and a progressively financed single standard of comprehensive quality health care for all are prerequisites for achieving the human right to health and health care.

We deplore that people living in poverty have poorer health outcomes than others, lacking access not only to health care but also to the living conditions that enable good health. We are committed to changing the inequitable, regressive financing of our market-based health system, which enables wealthier people to be healthier and impoverishes others by making access to care dependent on payment.

We recognize that in order to eliminate preventable deaths, needless suffering, and economic injustice and impoverishment of human beings, we must take action to realize the human right to health and health care.

We believe that the federal and state governments must fulfill their obligation to ensure that the health system satisfies the human right to health and health care.

We intend this People's Movement Assembly (PMA) to be a vibrant democratic space where a variety of organizations and individuals working on federal, state-wide and local campaigns can engage in a dialogue of ideas for actions and strategies that lead to a stronger and more unified national progressive movement where all voices have ample opportunity to define and lead this historic movement to achieve the fundamental right to health and health care.

On these principles stated above and below we dedicate our lives and work:

1. Health and health care are human rights. To protect and ensure the right to health, all human beings, regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, language, income, religion, sexuality, age, or disability are entitled to and shall be guaranteed full and equal access to health and comprehensive, quality health care. This includes long-term care, and the right to adequate food, water, housing, and a healthy environment.
2. Systemic barriers must not prevent people from accessing the health care they need. Health care services and resources must be distributed according to people's needs, as opposed to payment, privilege, immigration status, or other factors unrelated to health needs. Institutional racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, economic and other institutional barriers must be eliminated from the delivery of health care in the United States.
3. Race-based disparities in health access and outcomes must be eliminated.
4. Women are entitled to full reproductive health services, regardless of their ability to pay, as an expression of their human right to health.

5. Health care is a public good, not a market commodity. The financing of health care must be shared fairly and equitably, so that care is delivered regardless of an individual's ability to pay.
6. The health system must be transparent in design and operation, and accountable to the people it serves.
7. Patients in all communities should be able to have a regular doctor or other caregiver of their choice.
8. Resources must be used effectively, efficiently, and sustainably to protect the health of all.
9. Health care workers are entitled to the human right to work with dignity, including a fair, living wage and working conditions that include reasonable hours, adequate staffing and a safe and healthy workplace. They are entitled to choose their own representatives without any interference from their employers. Workers whose lives and livelihoods are affected by changes in health systems design or financing must receive just and adequate transitional support to include but not be limited to income security, educational and other professional retraining, and appropriate job placement.
10. All workers' right to health must be protected, so that they no longer work under conditions that violate international human rights standards, including occupational health and safety standards.
11. Every human being must be able to participate in the decision-making, resource allocation and oversight of the health care system that serves them.

We commit to strengthening our human rights movement for a national health system that is universal, equitable, accountable, and publicly funded and administered, based on single-payer financing.

Because we recognize the human right to health for all, we commit to building strategic alliances for a broader right to health movement dedicated to realizing the right to health for all people. We believe that the struggle for another health care system is an integral part of the struggle for another U.S., and another world.

Endorsing Organizations:

Healthcare-NOW!
California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee
Retirees for Single Payer
National Economic and Social Rights Initiative
Vermont Workers' Center
Coalition of Uninsured and Underinsured for Single Payer
Alliance for Democracy
Physicians for a National Health Program
Progressive Democrats of America
American Patients United
All Unions Committee for Single Payer
Latinos United Now and Always
Labor Campaign for Single Payer
United Steelworkers
People's Health Movement
Hesperian Foundation
Prosperity Agenda
Private Health Insurance Must Go
Women's Economic Agenda Project
Michigan Alliance to Strengthen Social Security and Medicare
Portland Jobs with Justice
Single Payer New York
Montana Human Rights Network
South Los Angeles Coalition for Health and Human Rights