

# Put People First! Pennsylvania

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## Statement of Support for the Vermont Workers Center

Submitted by Nijmie Dzurinko on Wed, 12/31/2014 - 3:01am

### PUT PEOPLE FIRST! PA STANDS WITH THE VERMONT WORKERS CENTER

Put People First! PA stands with the Vermont Workers Center in this critical time. Right before Christmas, Vermont Governor Shumlin [backtracked on his commitment](#) to follow through on Act 48, a state law passed in 2011 requiring the state of Vermont to provide health care as a public good to all residents by 2017.

The Vermont Workers Center's Healthcare is a Human Right campaign, launched in 2008 and victorious in passing Act 48 in 2011, is the foundation on which a statewide movement built to scale. The campaign offers a real solution to meet one of our most basic needs, and elevates expectations of our political system - to meet human needs equitably and put people before profit.

The campaign built solidarity between working families who are citizens and undocumented communities, using the guiding principle of universality combined with political development of leaders to ensure a spirit of "unite and resist" as opposed to "divide and conquer". When the legislature tried to exclude the undocumented from Act 48, VWC members rejected this false choice designed to crush the movement and defeated the measure. Act 48 passed in 2011 as the first truly universal state health care bill in the US.

The Healthcare is a Human Right Campaign is not going away. Shumlin's caving to corporate interests has only further galvanized Vermonters, because it shows that the people have struck a nerve by threatening a system where profit is more important than healing.

Now is the time to rally around Vermont as we build upon their incredible progress in transforming our health care system and building a movement for human rights. [Stay tuned](#) for opportunities to provide support early in the New Year.

Why is the fight to ensure Health care as a Human Right so critical now?

We who believe that #Blacklivesmatter organize for universal health care because those of us with the least economic and political power remain hyper-exploited as long as our health needs are a source of profit. According to Families USA, African Americans are 40% more likely to die from breast cancer and stroke and 60% more likely to be diabetic than Whites. The combination of low or no wages, systematic discrimination and unaffordable and inaccessible care is a prescription for early death in the Black community.





We who reject poverty wages and support the right of workers to form a union know that the important gains made from minimum wage increases stand to be offset by increasing health care premiums, co-pays, and deductibles.

We who understand that all people have human rights cannot stand by as the undocumented community is denied basic rights to care. Undocumented immigrants contribute over **\$150,000,000 in state and local taxes in Pennsylvania**, yet still face exclusion from our health care system.

We who are struggling families of all backgrounds have been conditioned to believe that our lives don't matter. We watch our partners, our children and our parents delay care, be denied care, or receive inadequate care. We watch as *one person per minute* dies in the US from heart disease and other chronic conditions.

In a time where we are winning small victories, but increasingly losing the war for survival with dignity, the Vermont Workers Center's Healthcare is a Human Right Campaign provides a potent example of why strategic statewide human rights campaigns build a transformational social movement to put people first. It demonstrates that we can chart new pathways for what is possible, instead of following the script of the One Percent. It shows that we *can* create a culture in which no one is left out. It provides a glimpse into the permanent organization we need in our communities and raises our expectations about what we deserve and about what is possible.

We are proud to stand with the Vermont Workers Center, now and always.

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