

July 30, 2009

## STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN BILL PASCHELL, JR.

### Delivered before the House of Representatives

I rise today to dispel misinformation that has been propagated about the health care system envisioned in America's Affordable Health Choices Act.

I have heard many of my colleagues across the aisle claim that the Democrats' health care proposal will result in rationing. I've heard anecdote after anecdote from the other side about a man here or a woman there who had to wait for care in Canada or England, and I do empathize with their stories.

But let's be clear—our health care plan absolutely does NOT envision a Canadian-style system. We are America, and we have proposed an American system with CHOICE and COMPETITION. We're not socializing medicine, and we're not rationing care. This is just rhetoric designed to stir fear and slow down efforts to bring real reform to our system.

With that said, I want to share with you a story not from Canada, not from England, but from right here in the United States—in Montclair, NJ, my district.

Jodi—who is one of my constituents—has been self-employed for about 20 years as a dietician. When she got divorced, she had to pay nearly \$500 for COBRA coverage. After a year and a half of timely payments, her plan notified her that her insurance was canceled because the automatic withdrawal from her bank account was processed a day late. There was no appeal available, and she was not even notified until six weeks after she lost coverage, so it was too late for her to be eligible for HIPAA protections related to pre-existing conditions.

When she finally found insurance on the individual market, all of her pre-existing conditions were excluded for a year. When she needed blood work because she was having unexplainable weight gain, the insurance company denied coverage for her tests because of a pre-existing thyroid condition, even though she had never experienced these symptoms before. When she had pain in her foot, the insurance company denied coverage for a doctor visit because she had been to the dermatologist 9 months prior for a wart.

But what is different about this story from the stories brought to us from the other side of the aisle is that we have the numbers that prove that Jodi was not alone when she was denied care that she needed.

If you want to talk about rationing, then let's talk about these numbers:

- Fifty-three percent of Americans cut back on their health care in the last year because of cost.
- Between January 2000 and June 2007, 5 million families filed for bankruptcy because of medical bills.

- About one-third of the uninsured have a chronic disease, and they are SIX TIMES less likely to receive care for a health problem than the insured.
- 25 million Americans are underinsured, which means that at least 25 million Americans face premiums, co-pays, and deductibles that they can hardly afford. For these people—people that have insurance—price stands between them and the care they need and the treatments their doctors prescribe.
- Another 46 million are uninsured with no protection whatsoever from these costs.
- As many as 22,000 Americans die each year because they don't have health insurance.

That, my friends, is RATIONING.

As costs continue to rise, these numbers will grow and grow, so, please, don't preach to us about rationing.

Plans offered by the other side fail to reduce the number of uninsured, fail to reign in health care costs, and erode employer-provided coverage—the one mode of insurance that has kept us from slipping over the precipice. America's Affordable Health Choices Act will expand access to health care, rein in health care costs, and end needless rationing in this country.

Thank you, Speaker.