

From: Maggie Belenz [mailto:maggielensz@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 24, 2018 10:35 PM
To: Loring Starr
Subject: Vermont Universal Healthcare Testimony

Hello, my name is Maggie Belenz and I am a registered nurse at the University of Vermont Medical Center, a Vermont Worker's Center member and a part of the nurses' union.

The healthcare crisis in our state at this time can no longer be ignored. The urgency and universality of this problem comes forth each and every time I step foot in the hospital. We see patients who are admitted unexpectedly who end up not only coping with a new diagnosis and treatments but are then met with the financial stress that comes from a broken system that doesn't allow for affordable healthcare for all.

Just this week I worked with a patient who was quite young, in his forties, who suffered from a massive stroke. Leaving him completely debilitated, with little hope of ever eating, walking or speaking again, let alone cuddling his children. The primary cause- he had lost his health insurance when he was laid off from his job earlier last year. He had to prioritize providing food and a roof for his family over paying out of pocket for his high blood pressure medication or primary care visits. It's hard to fathom the impact that his condition along with his hospital bills will have on the future of his family. This is just one example of so many we see at the bedside each day.

We as nurses are here for our patients, but are also here mobilizing and organizing to fight for an all accessible, universal system of healthcare for the society at large. We are here and we aren't going anywhere. Numbers are growing and we Vermonters want to be heard. The people of our state have spoken. Act 48 is already on the books and its implementation and financial backing is the answer. Universal Primary Care is not enough. It is risky to propose UPC as a "first step" because it could potentially fragment the overall goal of Universal Healthcare if it does not get passed. We are asking you, the representatives that our people have elected to take responsibility and give Vermont the publicly financed healthcare system that we need.

Thank you.

Maggie Belenz, RN
Burlington, VT