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The Vermont Workers' Center is an independent organization that has been organizing since 2007 for a universal public system that would ensure the human right to health care.

Grace's just one of the many stories we hear when people around the state talk with us about health care. The main problems people face are affordability and access. We hear from people who can't get healthcare because they are uninsured, or who can't use their insurance because of high deductibles, or who need services that aren't covered, or who can't find a primary care provider. The Health Care Advocate's report from last year had similar findings, and we weren't surprised to hear Sen. Hardy say that healthcare was the #1 concern she hears about from constituents.

I'm sure everyone here agrees that our health care system should be optimizing the health of our communities. That means making sure that everyone can afford and access health care.

We at the Vermont Workers' Center are calling on the Legislature to focus on guaranteeing care for all by taking public control of our health care system, *not* handing over the keys to private corporations with their own interests. The state should not be supporting the creation of a healthcare monopoly in private hands.

In order to do this, the Legislature needs to deal with affordability head-on, which S.120 does. We support the proposed joint committee being charged to consider the suggestions in the bill -- which include evaluating the ACO model and considering alternatives to that model. We also think that it is crucial that the committee hear from the public as proposed in the bill, and that these public hearings be listening sessions.

Every year, the Legislature has to tinker with things like expanding dental care, Dr. Dynasaur, and hearing aid coverage, to name three examples. We support these expansions, but this piecemeal approach ends up pitting one kind of care against another. This inevitably leaves some people behind. Instead, we need a unified and universal public system that addresses all healthcare needs and that is funded equitably.

The Legislature has also taken a lot of testimony on payment reform--specifically the All-Payer Model. This also won't get us to universal healthcare, and in fact takes us further away from that by privatizing healthcare in the hands of two large hospital

networks and employing a managed care model.

Instead of tinkering with coverage that puts band-aids on some problems, or regulates private actors more, Vermont needs to address the root causes of health care unaffordability--which are privatization and profiteering by various corporate entities such as the insurance companies, the ACO, hospital conglomerates, the pharmaceutical industry, and the for-profit nursing home industry. Establishing a committee dedicated to this task is a first step, and one we support. I'll also point out that some of this work was done previously, in former Gov. Shumlin's financing proposal for Act 48, which calculated that 93% of VT residents would have seen an increase in income *and* had access to healthcare. Ultimately the Legislature will need to take action to make health care affordable by moving us to a system that provides health care as a public good to all Vermont residents.