

Lehigh County Conference of Churches Board of Directors & Justice and Advocacy Committee
Healthcare Statement
9/15/09

The statement below reflects the view of the Board of Directors of the Lehigh County Conference of Churches and its Justice and Advocacy Committee but not necessarily its constituencies. Its purpose is to promote discussion and civil interaction around an issue important to all.

“For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me water; I was a stranger and you invited me into your homes; naked and you clothed me; sick and in prison, and you visited me.”

Jesus makes clear that a standard for judging all peoples has to do with how the least are doing in that community (Matt. 25:31-46).

Every person has the right to adequate health care. Every person has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of him/herself and of his/her family. This right flows from the sanctity of human life and the dignity that belongs to all persons who are made in the image of God. Quality health care for all is also the Christian responsibility in keeping with Christ’s threefold instruction to Peter, as the representative of the Church, that he should “feed my lambs,” “tend my sheep,” and “feed my sheep.” (John 10:10b)

We recognize that the health care system in this country is broken, and has left millions of Americans without access to affordable, accountable health care.

God’s intention of health (shalom), for the earth and its people, and Jesus’ promise of abundant life (health, healing, and restoration to wholeness in body, mind, and spirit) are central dimensions of the faith we profess and the vocation to which we are called as Christians. It leads the list in the order of service through which we participate in God’s activity through the church’s life by healing and reconciling and binding up wounds, ministering to the poor and sick, the lonely, and the powerless, engaging in the struggle to free people from sin, fear, oppression, hunger, and injustice, giving of itself and its substance to those who suffer, sharing with Christ in the establishing of his just, peaceable, and loving rule in the world.

Two-thirds of all uninsured persons are members of families who earn less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. This population is mostly represented by teens, young adults, newly separated couples, and recent immigrants. All these subpopulations contain a large number of homeless individuals. Failure to ensure access to quality healthcare for the 42.6 million currently uninsured can have a serious domino effect. Not only are entire families affected negatively, but also the entire nation is at risk in the event of an epidemic. By providing quality healthcare for the all, we are not just preserving the life of poor individuals; we are protecting the health of the entire nation.

Everyone in the U.S., regardless of age, sex, employment, healthcare status, pre-existing conditions, or national origin, has the right to healthcare that:

- is cost efficient and effective
- includes mental health and long term coverage
- promotes prevention
- eliminates disparities in availability to quality healthcare
- addresses special needs, rural and urban populations
- promotes quality of service and better health outcomes
- provides adequate numbers of qualified healthcare professionals
- provides adequate and timely payments to providers
- fosters a network of healthcare facilities and safety nets
- ensures continuity of coverage and care including transportability of insurance and no denial of coverage because of pre-existing conditions
- ensures choice of healthcare providers
- is easy to use and reduces paperwork and administrative costs

It is within the mission of faith based communities to support, advocate for, and assist in both the public and private implementation of adequate health care for all.