



March 27, 2017 – First Parish – PEOPLE’S HEALTH CARE FORUM

(My name is Delene Perley and I am on the Board of Maine AllCare.)

President Obama saw a need in our society – a way for more Americans to have access to healthcare. So he and the Democrats devised a system that helped some but with serious flaws. Some businesses – for example, pharmaceuticals -- are making out like bandits because of lobbying efforts that foreclosed on negotiations.

Some people in this country think that government should keep its mitts off of their healthcare. They tout “free choice” and “no regulations.” There are, however, a big number of people on Medicare (namely the disabled and elderly, I being one of them), who are quite happy with a government system.

The chaos of this past week, watching the Republicans try to come up with a different system reinforces the determination by me and the other people associated with Maine AllCare to keep working for a universal healthcare system in this country, basically an improved Medicare for everyone.

I recently attended a Healthcare Forum with Representative Chellie Pingree. If you were there, you heard heart-wrenching stories of people who, without the ACA, would not get the help they need and said poignantly “I will die.” All kinds of people in this country are falling through the cracks with or without Obamacare.

Okay – what IS our problem? Every other first world country has universal coverage – why don’t we? We aren’t better off – we spend about twice as much per person per year, but are 27th in life expectancy, 17th in mortality from cardiovascular diseases and 25th in mortality from cancer. We also have significantly higher infant mortality rate. What is wrong with us?

Is it because we value freedom and individual choice to our detriment? I read a very interesting article called “The Fake Freedom of American Health

Care,” written by Anu Partanen from Finland who moved here recently. Anu emphasizes that her taxes there were not really more than she pays here, that contrary to some Americans’ assumptions she had several healthcare options in Finland, and that there are zero bankruptcies due to medical issues in such countries, unlike here in our country.

I run a food pantry and see people who have had such catastrophes because their medical insurance was tied up with their employer and when they could no longer work, due to illness or injury, they lost their job and insurance and eventually lost all their money – so -- they are at a food pantry.

But let’s return to this intense desire we have for freedom. Anu concludes her article with these paraphrased thoughts:

“I wish Americans could experience the freedom of knowing that the health care system will always be there regardless of employment status. I wish we were free to assume that our doctors get paid a salary to look after our best interests, not to profit by generating billable tests and procedures. I want the freedom to know that the system will automatically take care of me and my family, without my having to battle for care in my moment of weakness and need. I wish for the freedom to know I will not go broke getting my care. That is real freedom.”

As we have seen this past week getting this settled by the national government is a huge challenge. There IS a bill in the House – # 676. But no Senator yet has submitted a parallel bill in the Senate. Urge King and Collins to do that.

But short of those bills passing, we reason -- Canada got a universal system province by province. We at Maine AllCare and similar organizations in some other states are thinking – okay -- let’s do this state by state. We are working toward a statewide referendum in 2020. But we cannot do this alone. We need your help, both time and money.

Thank you for listening and caring – sign up with us and let’s do this.