



Write Here! Write Now! June 11, 2019, Advocacy Day Hill Visits

Contact: advocacy@uusj.org or 703-786-5206; www.uusj.org click on Advocacy

Congregation Organizer: **Emailed letters due 12pmET June 10. Mailed Letter Delivery** - Must be received by Friday, June 7 to UUSJ % Lavona Grow 2308 N. Buchanan St., Arlington, VA 22207

Write Here! Write Now! Tell Your US Senators to Take Action on Healthcare Affordability

Why We Are Writing?

Healthcare affordability and prescription drug costs are getting more visibility in the news in part because Democratic presidential candidates are being asked their positions on various healthcare reform options. Bills in the House are receiving more traction including public hearings. But the Senate is moving more slowly. We want to take this opportunity to advocate for our long-held UUSJ position for access to affordable, quality healthcare for all and sharing our concern that any bills passed should help achieve that goal and especially meet the needs of low income and marginalized communities. Now is a good time for UUs to raise our concerns and share personal stories with our Senators. Members of Congress need to know we are paying attention! Our ethical, moral UU values call us to take action to protect the most vulnerable and hold our legislators accountable. It's up to us to keep these issues in front of our Senators and let them know they must take action.

Key Message

US Senators must take action to address the high cost of healthcare. The Senate should hold hearings and pass legislation to reduce healthcare costs that put many Americans at health and financial risk.

Background and Legislative Status

Background: The June 11 UUSJ Capitol Hill Advocacy Corps will go out on the Senate side to discuss healthcare concerns. UUSJ has advocated for affordable, accessible, and quality health care for all since April 2017 when the Affordable Care Act came under threat. Many Democratic presidential candidates and others are sponsoring or co-sponsoring legislation including universal healthcare, prescription drug costs, accessibility, and cost of "surprise" medical bills. Few bills are getting attention in the Senate. UUSJ will not be supporting any particular bill at this time, but will focus on those that address affordability, and we will state the UU long-held position on the need for universal healthcare.

Legislative Status: Senate Republican leadership has made it clear it has no intention to address comprehensive healthcare reform this year but there are bills in the Senate. There are several Senate bills that would address healthcare in a piecemeal approach. A few bills to note are: Medicare for All Act, Sen. Sanders, I-VT; Lower Health Care Costs Act, Senators Alexander, R-TN and Murray, D-WA. The fate of the Affordable Care Act is in the courts.

UU Grounding

Our UU 1st Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person. Healthcare has been a long-held priority for UUs for many years dating back to 1961 as demonstrated by resolutions and Actions of Immediate Witness, and a Statement of Conscience. <https://www.uua.org/action/health>. This includes a 1992 General Resolution "Universal Health Care" that called us to "...affirm that Comprehensive health care is a basic human right and demand the development of a system which guarantees quality healthcare to every individual in the United States."

(See other side for Talking Points, Questions to Ask, and Sample Letter)

Talking Points on Healthcare Issues

- **ESSENTIAL ACTION:** We must achieve accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare for all that eliminates health disparities, especially among marginalized and low-income communities.
- **DRUG PRICING AND COST:** We must find ways to reduce the price of prescription drugs. High drug prices force families to make impossible choices between their health and other basic needs and drive up the cost of coverage for everyone. More than 25 million people are skipping doses, taking less medication or delaying refilling prescriptions to save money. The majority of Americans favor most actions to address high prescription drug prices according to Peterson-Kaiser Health System Tracker Feb. 20, 2019.
- **MEDICAL BANKRUPTCY:** We must ensure that families are not put at high financial risk due to high healthcare costs. An article published by the [American Journal of Public Health](#), in March 2019, reported 60 percent of people who have filed for bankruptcy said a medical expense contributed to their bankruptcy. “Health or Medical” bankruptcies resulting from unpaid medical bills will affect nearly 2 million people this year (American Journal of Public Health, March 2019). In April 2, 2019 report of Gallup Poll Study, **45% of American adults said they feared a major health event will leave them bankrupt.**
- **SURPRISE MEDICAL BILLING:** We must protect patients from surprise medical bills. “Surprise medical bills” are those unexpected and often costly bills patients face when they get care from a doctor or hospital that isn’t in their insurance network and that drive people into debt.
- **HEALTH EQUITY:** We must protect vulnerable individuals and communities and eliminating health care disparities. Most uninsured people are in low-income families and have at least one worker in the family. Reflecting the more limited availability of public coverage in some states, adults are more likely to be uninsured than children. People of color are at higher risk of facing health disparities when uninsured than non-Hispanic Whites.

Suggested Questions to Ask Your Senators

- How would you address health disparities among people of color and low-income families?
- What is your position on addressing the high cost of prescription drugs?
- What do you propose to address surprise medical bills?

Sample Letter to Your Senators

[Use your own words -- this is only a sample letter. Please no form letters.]

[Today’s date]

Dear Senator _____, *[write two letters, one to each Senator]*

I am a Unitarian Universalist from *[optional: name of congregation and location]* and I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all people. I’m concerned that our healthcare system has become too expensive and leaves too many people, especially in low income and marginalized communities, at great financial risk when they seek necessary medical care. We must do better!

We need Congress to take immediate action to address the high cost of healthcare so that everyone can get the care they need. Please work across the aisle to address this national crisis.

[To support the message, include in your own words a personal experience, story, concern, or pick a talking point to include. Is there a way that healthcare and prescription drug costs affects you, your family, friends, etc.? Your stories help first change hearts and then change minds] [And/ or ask a question of your Senators that speaks to you]

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME and include your COMPLETE ADDRESS]

(See other side for Background, UU Grounding, Message and Instructions for Delivering Letters)