

# NY Labor for Single Payer Healthcare – HR676

c/o Troy Area Labor Council  
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Cropseyville, NY 12052  
(518) 279-3749

March 15, 2008

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Capable of great medicine, America's health care system is in deep trouble. Our system of health insurance has become not only too costly but simply inadequate. Medicaid is in crisis. All of us are at risk – all but the private insurance industry. It doesn't have to be this way.

The health care crisis facing our country explodes into every collective bargaining session. Employers drive to cut benefits. Health costs shift to individual workers. Health insurance dominates every contract consideration, killing progress in wages and other benefits.

Too many retirees, after a life of hard work, are stripped of health coverage. Health care bills cause over 50% of bankruptcies — and three out of four of those bankrupted by medical bills had health insurance at the outset of their bankrupting illness!

The U. S. spends 16% of gross domestic product (GDP) on health care, twice what any other industrialized nation spends, yet ranks 37th in performance according to the World Health Organization. We lag behind other industrialized countries in life expectancy and infant mortality.

In New York State 2.8 million people, including nearly 500,000 children, had no health coverage whatsoever in 2006. One out of three New Yorkers, roughly 7 million people, went without health insurance at some point during 2006-2007. Nearly 58,000 New Yorkers filed for personal bankruptcy in 2006.

It doesn't have to be this way. We can do better.

HR 676 is legislation introduced by Congressman John Conyers Jr. (D-MI) and co-sponsored by 88 members of the House of Representatives including New York Representatives Yvette Clark, Eliot Engel, Maurice Hinchey, Carolyn Maloney, Michael McNulty, Gregory Meeks, Jerrold Nadler, Charles Rangel, Jose Serrano, Edolphus Towns, and Anthony Weiner.

HR 676 would establish a single payer health care system by expanding a greatly improved Medicare system to cover everyone. It would restore our right to choose our healthcare providers and free us from insurance company red tape and interference in medical decisions.

HR 676 would cover everyone for all necessary medical care including prescription drugs, hospital, surgical, outpatient services, primary and preventive care, emergency services, dental, mental health, home health, physical therapy, rehabilitation (including for substance abuse), vision care, chiropractic and long term care.

HR 676 will end deductibles and co-payments. HR 676 will save billions annually by eliminating the high overhead and profits of the private health insurance industry and HMOs.

HR 676 has already been endorsed by 33 state labor federations, 97 Central Labor Councils, and 384 union locals and other labor organizations in 48 states.

(over please)

**We request that your organization join with us in endorsing HR 676.**

We can help our fellow union members by taking health care off the bargaining table. By standing up for all working people, and leading the effort to truly provide healthcare for all, we will affirm labor's rightful role as a leader in the fight for social justice.

The enclosed resolution is provided as a sample for your convenience. If a HR 676 resolution is approved by your labor organization, please forward us a copy. You may also want to send copies to AFL-CIO President John Sweeney (815 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20006); NYS AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes (50 Broad St., 35<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC, NY 10004); member(s) of Congress who represent your members; and Senators Clinton and Schumer. If you would like a representative of our coalition or a medical doctor from Physicians for a National Health Program to speak to your local to learn more, please let us know.

In Solidarity,

Tina Gerardi, MS, RN, CAE, Chief Executive Officer, NYS Nurses Association

Ken Brynien, President, NYS Public Employees Federation, AFT/SEIU Local 4053

Phillip H. Smith, President, United University Professions, AFT 2190

Mary Landolfi, President, AFM Local 802, Associated Musicians of Greater NY

Paul Sumner, President, Lodge 1145, Int. Assoc. Machinist (IAM), Selkirk and DeWitt, NY

Terry Tyoe, Division Leader, PEF/encon, PEF Division 169 (NY City & Upstate NY)

Barbara Bowen, President, Professional Staff Congress of CUNY, AFT 2334, New York, NY

Sandy Pope, President, Teamsters (IBT) Local 805, New York, NY

Larry S. Bulman, Business Manager, UA, Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 773, S. Glens Falls, NY

Jeff Vogel\*, Delegate Assembly, 1199 United Healthcare Workers East / SEIU, New York City

Martha Livingston, Delegate Assembly, United University Professions, AFT 2190, Old Westbury Long Island

Joe Fox, President, Capital District Area Labor Federation

Kathy Taylor, President, Hudson Valley Area Labor Federation

Jim Bertolone, President, Rochester & Genesee Valley Area Labor Federation

Steve Green, President, Albany County Central Federation of Labor

Tom Grace\*, Chair, Political Action Committee, Buffalo AFL-CIO

Peggy Costello, President, Chemung/Schuyler Labor Assembly

Cliff Brosnan, President, Greater Glens Falls Central Labor Council

Mary Twitchell, President, Tri-County (Chenango, Delaware & Otsego) Central Labor Council

Mike Keenan, President, Troy Area Labor Council

\* The affiliations of these two individuals are listed for identification purposes only