

Interfaith IMPACT of New York State

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INTERFAITH LEADERS SUPPORT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON HEALTH CARE REFORM

Interfaith IMPACT of New York State, a statewide advocacy organization representing progressive Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, and Reform Jewish congregations, clergy and individuals, strongly supports creation of a Legislative Commission on Health Coverage Reform in New York State.

Bills supporting the creation of this commission were introduced in April, 2005 by Senator Marchi (S04928) and Assemblyman Gottfried (A06575). The Senate bill is currently before the Committee on Finance, and the Assembly bill is before the Committee on Health. While differing in wording and certain details, the bills appear to be easily reconciled.

The commission would examine, evaluate and make recommendations concerning possible methods of providing comprehensive, affordable, quality health care to all New Yorkers while controlling costs and ensuring freedom of choice for consumers. It would solicit input from the general public, advocacy groups, health care providers, organized labor and other stakeholders in the health care system, then submit a report to the legislature with its recommendations. A similar model has been used successfully in other states, including California, Maine and Maryland.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King said, "Of all forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane." Yet inequality is rampant in our nation's and New York State's health care system. Every year, 18,000 Americans, including countless New Yorkers, die prematurely because they don't have health insurance, according to the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine. Without timely treatment and diagnosis, the uninsured become sicker and die sooner. When they do receive care, it is often at hospital emergency rooms and urgent care clinics. The expense and inefficiency of these options ultimately drive up health care costs for everyone, not just the uninsured.

"Heal the hurt of my people" is a Biblical mandate. Bringing healing to the sick is one of the basic human obligations, as attested to by both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. As individuals of faith, we have a duty to help ensure that basic health care is available to each and every resident of New York State. Financially, socially and ethically, we cannot afford to do otherwise.

On behalf of our member congregations, clergy and individuals of faith across the state, IINYS calls on our elected officials and health care providers to make universal access to health care a reality within the next five years, and to create the Legislative Commission on Health Care Reform as a significant step in attaining this goal.

April 24, 2006

A statewide coalition of mainstream and progressive religious faiths advocating for social justice and human rights. IINYS includes Protestant, Reform Jewish and Unitarian Universalist congregations and individuals.