

The Healthcare Is a Human Right Campaign Collaborative

Joint Campaign Vision and Strategy

October 15, 2014

Our vision: the healthcare domino effect

Healthcare Is a Human Right is a people's movement organizing state by state to win universal, publicly financed healthcare and build a society that puts people's needs ahead of profits. After succeeding in passing the country's first universal healthcare law in Vermont, the campaign has spread from state to state with the goal of creating a domino effect of universal healthcare wins across the country.

As grassroots groups in Maine, Maryland, and Pennsylvania position the next *Healthcare Is a Human Right* dominoes, they stand in solidarity with Vermont's push for transitioning to a universal healthcare system.

Healthcare Is a Human Right recognizes that change happens when people most impacted by injustice come together to build their power and grow a grassroots, democratic movement united across issues and traditional divisions. Through deep organizing, the campaign is advancing political understanding and leadership to effect real change.

This is how solving the healthcare crisis becomes politically possible. *Healthcare Is a Human Right* shows the way forward beyond Obamacare, as people across the country continue to suffer exclusions from access to care under the Affordable Care Act. A human rights-based organizing approach can help realize what single payer advocates have demanded for decades: a healthcare system that guarantees every person access to the care they need, financed as a public good through the tax system. Establishing universal healthcare in one state creates momentum for the campaign model to spread to others. This includes states that are ripe for transformational change, as well as those that have yet to expand Medicaid to all people in poverty. Campaigns in Oregon and Washington are calling for the right to healthcare, as is the Moral Mondays movement in the South and beyond, united by our shared human rights. State-based victories will result in healthcare dominoes falling, state by state, just as they did in Canada, until the vision of a universal, publicly financed healthcare system in the United States becomes a reality.

Our model: building people power

The *Healthcare Is a Human Right* model offers a winning approach for effecting real change by building the power needed to reach critical mass. The 2011 breakthrough in Vermont was achieved by a people's movement spearheaded by the Vermont Worker's Center (VWC). Sharing the many lessons from this ongoing effort has made the campaigns in other states stronger and crystallized the basic ingredients of this human rights organizing model. *Healthcare Is a Human Right* campaigns are:

- Building permanent organization among people most impacted, including through creating organizing committees in people's communities around each state, anchored by a grassroots base-building group that grows, develops and maintains grassroots leadership, and is governed by the people it organizes

- Developing leaders in an ongoing process that raises consciousness, advances collective learning and political education, and enables fully participatory decision-making on goals and strategy
- Using a human rights framework and applying human rights principles to all activities
- Changing the public and political debate by telling people's own stories that illuminate the structural failures of the current system along with people's agency and leadership
- Holding powerholders accountable for ensuring human rights
- Growing the broader human rights movement, uniting constituencies and allies across issues and divisions

Our story: put people's needs and rights first

People are struggling to meet their healthcare needs, along with their needs for food, housing, education, and work with dignity. Because everyone has the right to a dignified life, these human needs give rise to our human rights. Governments - formed by us to serve our communities - have an obligation to protect and fulfill those rights. Yet to receive the healthcare they need in the current health insurance system, people must buy restrictive insurance policies, pay out-of-pocket fees when seeing a doctor, and may be left with high medical bills that cause financial hardship. Because healthcare is sold as a commodity in a private, market-based insurance system, the U.S. has poorer health outcomes yet higher expenses than many other countries. Only a universal, publicly financed healthcare system that provides healthcare as a public good can solve this crisis and end these injustices.

Despite the Affordable Care Act, the healthcare crisis continues, affecting millions of people everywhere. *Healthcare Is a Human Right* recognizes the systems and politics of exploitation, oppression, structural racism, and privatization that undergird this denial of our rights. By organizing our communities and overcoming divisions, our campaign targets the roots of this crisis, led by our vision of a just society guided by human rights principles. A society that satisfies the principle of universality will no longer exclude people from access to healthcare or any other rights. It will no longer worship the market and withhold public goods. A society that meets the principle of equity will not tolerate the concentration of power and wealth that secures excellent healthcare for some but shortens the lives of others. A truly democratic society that develops transparent, accountable, and participatory processes will no longer suppress the power of the people to decide what healthcare system best meets their needs and rights.

Healthcare Is a Human Right is a collective and diverse struggle led by people most impacted by injustice. Our vision is bold and broad, but it starts close to home. We join together and build people power to create a universal health system as a step toward a just economy that enables everyone to meet their fundamental needs and live with dignity.

Our campaign

With the *Healthcare Is a Human Right* campaign in Vermont we have piloted a winning model for universal healthcare at the state level. We subsequently launched campaigns in Maine, Maryland, and Pennsylvania that we are seeking to strengthen and expand going forward. The ultimate, long-term goal of our campaign is to win universal, publicly financed healthcare for everyone in the United States.