

Testimony before the Business Affairs and Labor Committee in HB09-1273, March 18, 2009

Diane Lucas, MD, PhD, Pediatrician in private practice (Rocky Mountain Pediatrics), and also part of Colorado Buddhist community, whose members overwhelmingly support this bill.

I would like to express my strong support for the Colorado Guaranteed Health Care Act.

I would like to tell you what this bill means to me personally.

This bill is about treating the hard-working people of Colorado with the basic human dignity they deserve!

Our country, and our state of Colorado along with it, is the only industrialized country in the world that does not recognize an obligation to provide basic health care to all of its people – even countries such as Turkey and Thailand do that.

We are a third world country when it comes the accessibility of health care for nearly half of our population, and we are the laughing stock of the world on this issue. I have lived and worked abroad; I know that firsthand.

I cannot understand how a country, or a state like Colorado, can expect people to get up and go to work every day, pay their taxes, take care of their children, but deny them guaranteed access to quality, affordable basic health services.

Every day in our country as a whole, more than 50 people die for lack of health care. So even if that number is only one in Colorado, that is one more person than should be dying for lack of health care in a great state in one of the richest country in the world.

And I do not understand why it is acceptable to have two separate tracks of health care, one for the fortunate, and another for the less fortunate.

Any why the less fortunate, those with Medicaid or nothing at all, have to be reduced to begging for services.

I don't know if any of the Committee members have every found themselves without health insurance, but I have! And let me tell you, it is a horrible, sinking feeling of vulnerability, knowing that if you become sick or injured, you could lose everything you ever worked for.

And while we have a system of employer-based insurance, 41% of the adult workers in Colorado are not eligible for, or not even offered, health care benefits where they work! **41%!!!!**

And, too, it's about people whose insurance coverage is so inadequate, or so expensive to access, that a single illness can put them deeply into debt or even bankruptcy.

Clearly, our health insurance system doesn't work, and if we didn't have to pay them so much, we could afford to care for people.

This bill is also about the 26 year old husband and father who was allowed to die in a tax-supported Denver hospital, because he did not have health insurance, the same week that a 90 year old, who couldn't get himself out of bed, in the same hospital, received a 5 vessel coronary artery bypass graft because he had good insurance. I cared for these people. We ration in the worst possible way, by insurance!