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House Bill 1273, Colorado Guaranteed Health Care Act
Business Affairs and Labor Committee
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One big advantage of universal, single-payer health care would be the elimination of the Workers Comp system. My 28-year-old daughter spent a year at the mercy of this inefficient, infuriating system in New York City, where she is an aspiring actress. When she fell down a flight of stairs at her waitress job, the soft tissue in Nancy's shoulder was seriously damaged. She was unable to lift her arm over her head or pick up anything heavy for more than a year. She has worked as a professional actress and dancer in Denver-area theaters and on Holland Cruise Line.

After her accident, she was unable to support herself, either on the stage or waiting tables. She was covered by her own medical insurance (at astronomical out-of-pocket cost), but was unable to use it because her injury happened on the job. The restaurant where she was hurt claimed she was a part-time worker, even though she had pay records proving she was working 60-hour weeks. They offered no compensation for lost wages. Nancy had to depend on family, friends, and her credit card while Workers Comp lawyers argued for a year about her settlement and bargained her access to physical therapy and on-going treatment. Countless hours and dollars were wasted with duplicate medical records and two sets of doctors (her own and the Workers Comp system that controlled payment.) She had to keep going to court to prove that she still needed treatment and physical therapy to regain lost range of motion in her shoulder.

Nancy told me that most waitresses are forced back to work before their injuries are healed out of pure desperation. How many medical conditions are made worse by a system whose goal is to cut costs by denying services? Best-care practices would actually decrease long-term costs of care. How much easier and truly cost effective it would be if those injured on the job could have a choice of providers? The doctor who is most familiar with the patient's medical history and records could prescribe appropriate treatment in a timely manner, regardless of whether an injury is work-related or not.