



80 Washington Street, Office #436 • Providence, Rhode Island 02903-1803
Tel: 401.467.1717 • Fax: 401.467.2707 • Email: ricj@cox.net • Web: www.ricj.org

Rhode Island for Community and Justice
Statement of Principles for Health Care Reform
Adopted November 5, 2009, RICJ Board of Directors

HEALTH CARE IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT. Most Americans believe it is wrong to deny access to health care because of a person's income or race – that if a person needs health care, they should receive it. It is the duty of a compassionate society to ensure that this ideal becomes a practical reality, and that the dignity and care of human beings is not subjugated to the goal of monetary gain.

As an organization devoted to fighting bias, bigotry, and racism, RICJ has a particular concern with those most harmed by an inadequate health care system: children and youth, the poor, individuals with serious health conditions, minority groups, and low-paid workers. Any healthcare reform must be structured and administered so as to prevent discrimination against those whom our current health care system fails most.

As an organization whose mission prioritizes bringing people together to seek understanding and common ground, RICJ has watched with dismay the incivility and vehemence of the debate on health care reform. One of the most critical issues of our time, this debate deserves all the thoughtfulness, creativity and open-mindedness that we can bring, in finding solutions.

In this debate, no matter what our different politics or beliefs, there are points where we agree: that our health care system serves some well but does not serve a significant and growing number of Americans, and Rhode Islanders; that costs and inefficiencies are too great; that relying on emergency care serves no one well; that reform should serve our nation.

RICJ believes that a health care proposal must have certain essential characteristics. It must:

- Offer every person substantive, and not merely nominal, health care.
- Provide an equal opportunity for all to receive coverage and care, regardless of their economic or medical status.
- Minimize bureaucratic procedures and inefficiencies in the public and private sectors.
- Ensure that the burden of providing and maintaining a comprehensive health care system is shared by all and equitably allocated between government, private individuals, and private industry.
- Eliminate arbitrary and discriminatory practices that currently create a class of uninsured or inadequately insured Americans who are forced to endure greater health risks and conditions, burdening themselves, their families, and the American public.

A plan for health care reform possessing these characteristics can serve the right of all Americans to receive quality, affordable health care.