

**CLUE Healthcare Vigil – October 18, 2007***Rabbi Julie Pelc**Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health*

If you answer yes to any of the following questions, **please raise your hand/stand up if:**

1. You don't have any health Insurance
2. At any time within the past 12 months, you did not have health insurance
3. Your family member is uninsured
4. If you've ever been denied health insurance
5. If you have health insurance but have been denied care for any reason
6. If your health insurance has ever denied you the prescription you need?
7. If you have ever gone without prescription drugs because your health care insurance has been insufficient.
8. If you've faced substantial financial loss and/or debt due to expenses related to health care?
9. If you know anyone who does not have health insurance?

It is clear from the exercise we just did that there is

**something wrong with our health care system.** It is sick

and in need of some real care. Too many of us have felt the *pain* of the high cost of health coverage *physically*, *spiritually*, and *emotionally*. We do not have to stretch our arms wide to see who is affected by the cost of health care.

This concern strikes all levels of society.

We come here today from all walks of life, people of faith, unions, doctors, nurses, legislators, mothers and fathers, citizens of Los Angeles, all of us human beings susceptible to disease, accidents, and the common cold, **none of us above the need for health care**. We, as human beings, want and need health coverage.

As beings created in the image of God, we **deserve access to consistent and quality health care**.

We all know that we have a long way to go in our quest for justice.

We read in the Book of Amos, Chapter 5, verse 24: “*let justice flow like a mighty stream!*” I now add, “*let health and healing fill the earth as the waters fill the sea.*”

I am here today as a representative of the Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health. We are not proponents of any one bill or plan. But we also know that the current state of the Health Care System is not good. **Our health care system is sick, and we want it to “get well soon.”**

- We believe that everyone should get the healthcare they need, when they need it.
- We believe quality healthcare could be affordable.
- We believe that there must be insurance reforms so that everyone has access to health care coverage.
- We believe that individuals need to be protected and they should not have to buy into substandard

health care plans that do not cover their health care needs.

- We support policies that preserve and strengthen our hospitals, emergency rooms and trauma centers.
- We believe that we must control costs - that the ever-escalating high cost of healthcare coverage is inappropriate and unfair.

The issue of Health care is an HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE // It is a SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE // It is a human priority.

We also believe that **Health Care is a *Jewish* priority.**

In a progressive, Jewish, online blog, “JSpot”, the question was rhetorically posed, “**Which is more**

**important: providing health care or building a synagogue?”**

The article continues by citing Jewish sources which emphatically answer: **health care!**

- According to a code of Jewish law, the *Shulchan Arukh*, we should **prioritize** using communal funds for the **care of the sick over other obligations**, including the construction of a synagogue. (Yoreh De'ah 249:16)
- An early medical authority, Rabbi Rafael Mordechai Malchi, continued in this tradition when he wrote:
  - **In every place..., the community [should] set aside a fund to care of the sick.**

- **When poor people are ill and who cannot afford medical expenses, the community sends them a doctor to visit them, and the medicine is paid for by the communal fund.** (Tzitz Eliezer 5:4)

It is our spiritual, moral, *Jewish* obligation to provide health care coverage to **every person who needs coverage. To every person – all of whom created in the image of God.**

This past Sunday, October 14, congregations spanning the country participated in **Compassion Sabbath/Sunday**. The event, organized by a national interfaith network, was expected to inspire more than 10,000 phone calls to members of Congress in favor of health care reform.

- Jewish law and tradition may play a role in our activism on behalf of health care.
- But so does our own increasing insecurity about our own health and the health of our neighbors and loved ones
- **When we think of the faces of those in need of healing, our prayers for good health have an added sense of urgency.**

**The health of our community depends on the care we receive.**

I ask you to join me in praying the traditional Jewish prayer for healing, the ***misheberach***, in the name of all those in need of healing – most especially, let us pray for the renewed health of the health care system itself.

*May God who blessed our ancestors:  
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah,  
Rebecca, Rachel and Leah; bless and heal  
The Healthcare System – the vessel through  
which we might all find healing.*

*May the Holy One Blessed-Be-God protect  
The Healthcare System and save it from all  
illness and distress and from all affliction.  
Bestow blessing and success upon all the  
work of its hands.*

*May The Healthcare System merit long life  
and may its years be blessed with  
abundant strength and peace.*

*For the sake of all of the congregation  
praying for The Healthcare System and in  
its own merit, may the Holy One Blessed-  
Be-God bestow abundant mercy upon it,  
strengthen it, and fully end its distress.*

*Our God in Heaven, may it be Your will  
that our prayers and requests come before  
Your merciful throne, and send complete*

*healing: healing of soul, healing of spirit,  
and healing of body to The Healthcare  
System- speedily in our time.  
And let us say together, "amen".*

This is a prayer for healing in English, inspired largely  
by the Psalms:

God, hear our prayer,  
And let our cries come to You.  
Do not hide from us in the time of our  
distress  
Turn to us and speedily answer our prayer.  
Eternal God, Source of healing,  
Out of our distress we call upon You.  
Help us sense Your presence  
At this difficult time.  
Grant us patience when the hours are heavy;  
In hurt or disappointment, give us courage.  
Keep us trustful in Your love.  
Give us strength for today, and hope for  
tomorrow.  
To your loving hands we commit our spirit  
When asleep and when awake.  
You are with us; We shall not fear.

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