

Health Care Justice Campaign Faith Caucus Minutes from February 18, 2008

In attendance: Nelvie Anderson, Peoria Church Women United; Harlette Washington, Congregational Church of Park Manor; Beth Najberg, Union for Reform Judaism; Rev. Jeffrey Phillips, Arlington Heights UCC; Rev. Dr. Larry Ulrich, Council of Religious Leaders; Rev. Larry Greenfield, American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago; Ann Kleboe, Union Church of Hinsdale; Claudia Austin, Church Women United; Rev. Jim Benn, Eden UCC, Chicago; Rev. Kirsten Peachey, Advocate Congregational Health Partnerships; Rev. Dave Inglis, First Congregational Church of Crystal Lake; Rev. Dave McCurdy, Advocate Healthcare; Rev. & Mrs. JR Sandman; Shiraz Malik, ED, Islamic Medical Assn of North America; Jonathan VanderBrug, Jessica Palys & Beth Youngblood – CBHC

Illinois Senator Dave Koehler Presents SB 1940; Family & Employer Health Care Act

Senator Koehler detailed how SB1940 will contain the recommendations of the Adequate Health Care Task Force. He also emphasized how the bill will provide health care options for small businesses and the uninsured; however. Major components:

- The Task Force recommendations include both an employer and individual mandate; however, SB 1940 will likely not contain an individual mandate.
- Significant insurance reform including ‘guaranteed issue’ (or no exclusion of pre-existing conditions).
- The employer assessment will consist of a 3.5% payroll tax on businesses with more than 10 employees that don’t spend at least 4% of payroll on healthcare (typical health care expenditure is 8-12% of payroll). Businesses with 25 or fewer full-time employees could voluntarily buy-in to the guaranteed issue product. If an employee has opted out of health coverage because a spouse is covered elsewhere, it would not count against the employer.
- Need one more bill to address the backlog of Medicaid payments. Sen. Koehler would like to dedicate a tax revenue stream for a one-time catch up.
- The employer assessment would raise approximately \$1 billion.
- Also, Senator Schoenberg will introduce a bill to cover the “Illinois Assist” component of the Task Force plan, that is, expanding public coverage to childless adults under 100% FPL.

How people of faith can play a role:

Senator Koehler hopes faith communities can help disseminate details on the health care plan and what is just. As a UCC Minister, Senator Koehler feels talking about it from the pulpit is certainly appropriate, or in discussion groups about justice of health care. When asked about how many letters, visits and calls are needed, Senator Koehler emphasized that legislators have generally not heard nearly enough from their constituents on health care, especially compared to the number of calls on the GRT last year. “Every visit, letter and phone call is significant,” he said.

The Adequate Health Care Task Force Recommendations are attached, and the full report or summary can be read at www.idph.state.il.us/hcja.

SOUND THE ALARM! for Health Care Justice – April 4-6, 2008

Sound the Alarm is the perfect opportunity for communities of faith to make the outcry for health care justice. Please commit to hold a “Sound the Alarm” prayer and/or event at your congregation now by emailing Jessica. (jpalys@cbhconline.org).

Unnatural Causes; PBS Series on Healthcare starts April 6

In coordination with a 4-part PBS series on health care disparity, trainings are being offered to help lead discussion in your congregation or community. View www.unnaturalcauses.org for more details.

Next Faith Caucus Conference Call: March 17 at 11:30