

HEALTH CARE AS A MORAL VALUE

Questions for Candidates and Elected Leaders



*The moral test of a society is how that society treats . . .
those who are in the dawn of life – the children;
those who are in the twilight of life – the elderly;
those who are in the shadow of life – the sick, the needy,
and the differently abled.* ~ Attributed to numerous sources

PEOPLE OF FAITH have a very special role to play in our state and national conversations about health care reform – the role of elevating the moral message that our goal must be a health care future that includes EVERYONE and works well for ALL of us. In fulfilling that role, we will have the opportunity and the responsibility to question our elected leaders and candidates about how their proposals move us toward that goal.

Particular questions can be raised about justice and fairness to help us better understand how proposals measure up to our faith values. But to do any of that, we need a very basic understanding of what is actually challenging our moral sensibilities. Asking the difficult questions about justice can help us clarify where our voices will be important.

Reflections for people of faith

With the moral values found in our faith traditions as the starting point, reflections about justice and fairness can help us keep our focus on those issues which make the greatest contribution to the common good.

- Remembering our most vulnerable populations – the children, the elderly, the sick, the impoverished, the differently abled:

Who is included . . . AND . . . the more important question: Who is excluded?

- Reflecting on the economic realities of U.S. health care:

Who pays . . . AND . . . who pays the most in proportion to their ability to pay?

Who profits . . . AND . . . who profits at the expense of those who cannot pay?

- Recognizing the political processes that are necessary to make change happen:

Whose voices are being heard . . . AND . . . Whose voices are not being heard as elected officials struggle with difficult decisions about how to make reform happen?

Questions for the candidates

In this electoral season, we're hearing numerous proposals for reforming U.S. health care. Many more people will be covered by each proposal and different ways of paying for the plans are suggested. When writing a letter to a candidate or attending a candidate forum, here are some sample questions to help you better understand their proposals.

Mr./Ms. Candidate:

- Does your proposal make affordable health care available to everyone?
- If not, who is still excluded and how do you propose they get their needed health care?
- Have you talked to uninsured families to find out what they consider to be affordable?
- Have you talked with families who have insurance but don't get care because they can't afford deductibles, co-payments, or medicine?
- What promises have you made to other health care stakeholder groups, like the insurance and pharmaceutical industries, to gain support for this proposal?