

# My View: Single-payer health care closes loopholes

Diane Lucas

Tuesday, October 15, 2019

**While it's a start, the STOP Surprise Medical Bills Act is just another Band-Aid on the sinking ship known as the American health care system.**

---

In his recent guest column, "Close loophole on surprise medical bills," Dr. Chuck Goldberg of Portland recounted the despicable practice of surprise billing. Drew Calver of Austin, Texas, received a bill for \$110,000 after an ambulance took Calver, who was suffering a heart attack, to a hospital not covered by his insurance.

Goldberg then described the STOP Surprise Medical Bills Act currently in Congress. This act would ensure that the insurance company pays the bill, through a cumbersome procedure, sometimes involving a third-party arbitration mechanism.

While it's a start, the STOP Act is just another Band-Aid on the sinking ship known as the American health care system.

We pay, by far, the most of any industrialized nation for our health care, yet we have some of the worst outcomes. Unlike in other countries, our life expectancy is actually going down. An estimated 29 million of us are uninsured; 40 million others have too little insurance to protect us when we need it. And only in the United States of America can illness lead you to bankruptcy.

Goldberg stated that "no better solution has been presented" for this problem. That's wrong, Dr. Goldberg. There is a solution. It's called Medicare for all or single payer, a payment system that would direct all money currently being spent on health care into a government-administered fund covering everyone.

---

Being uninsured or out of network would be impossible because health insurance companies would be eliminated. Roughly 95% of Americans would pay less for their health care than they do now and get better care with no out-of-pocket costs. The average family could expect to save about \$6,000 over a decade.

The good news is that House Bill 1384, The Medicare for All Act of 2019, has been introduced in Congress to do just that.

You can be sure that the spin doctors of the health care and pharmaceutical industry are working hard to defeat HB 1384, mislabeling it "socialism" (it's not; it's social insurance), warning of a "government takeover of health care" (it's not; government would only finance the system, and your doctor would make medical decisions) and warning of rationing and poor quality of care (no evidence for that).

But can you blame them? They're our biggest, most profitable industry and they're not giving up without a fight. We need to stay on top of this to stay informed.

Portland will host Healthcare-NOW's single-payer activist national conference Oct. 18-20, beginning with a rally at Pioneer Courthouse Square at 4 p.m. Friday, Oct 18. Join us. We're not giving up, either.

*Dr. Diane Lucas is a retired pediatrician living in Portland and a member of the Portland chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program, [www.pnhp.org](http://www.pnhp.org). She can be reached at [dianeilucas@gmail.com](mailto:dianeilucas@gmail.com).*

<https://pamplinmedia.com/pt/10-opinion/440864-353631-my-view-single-payer-health-care-closes-loopholes>

Portland Tribune