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Testimony on Health Care

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Senators,

My name is Jean de Smet, and I ran for Lieutenant Governor on the Green Party ticket this past fall. As the other candidates can tell you, I received standing ovations across the state when I advocated the single payer universal health care system. The people of CT understand that this is what we need, and we will not accept putting band aids on the existing system.

We need Health Care based on the premise that health care is a human right. The Green Party advocates a bold change in our health care system. Under a universal single-payer health care system, the administrative waste of paper shuffling and claims denials would be redirected to patient care and saving money, resulting in quality, affordable care.

The United States spends by far the most on health care per person—more than twice as much as Europe, Canada and Japan, which all have some version of national health insurance. Yet we are near the bottom in nearly every measure of our health (1), including a disgraceful 28<sup>th</sup> in life expectancy.

State studies by Massachusetts and Connecticut have shown that single payer universal health care would save 1 to 2 billion dollars per year from the total medical expenses in those states despite covering all the uninsured and increasing health care benefits. (2) Repeated research has shown that prevention education alone would save thousands of times its cost through decreases in treatment.

The economic effects of the existing corporate owned system are that businesses are outsourcing labor to countries that supply health care to their citizens, or are trying to push the burden onto employees, just to remain competitive. And of the more than 1.5 million bankruptcies filed in the U.S. each year, about half are a result of medical bills; of those, three-quarters of filers had health insurance. 1

Clearly our health system is a failed experiment in Corporate-supplied health care. It is broke. Let's fix it. We must have the courage and wisdom to embrace the single-payer model that is successfully practiced in so many other countries. There are many models to pick and choose from. We can design the best citizen-controlled health care system in the world, and I applaud the proposal to form a citizen committee to move in that direction. Give them support, staff, money and deadlines.

We need to take back control of our health care and improve it. Not by handing it over to the government, not by handing it over to business, but by creating a model of citizen-controlled care which will efficiently meet our needs. We do not want a Medicare model with an alphabet soup of bad, risky and over-priced choices. Just

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because CT citizens have a lot of choice does not mean that we have any good choices.

Senators Williams and Looney's proposal certainly acknowledges and addresses the terrible lack of care that some people face. But we will go bankrupt if we continue to "fix" the problem by continuing to feed the insurance industry. Despite decades of reforms and so-called improvements, health care expenses are growing and destroying our economy and people's lives.

We need to have the courage to set and clearly articulate the goal of single payer, universal health care—Not a health insurance program. Health care must be handled by a not-for-profit corporation with full disclosure of the finances and full care for everyone.

The Green Party also supports a wide range of health care services, not just traditional medicine that too often emphasizes high-tech intervention and surgical techniques. We support the evidence-based teaching of holistic and humane health approaches and, as appropriate, the use of complementary and alternative therapies such as herbal medicines, homeopathy, acupuncture, and other healing approaches.

The current system's high costs and widely recognized failures demand that bold steps be taken. The Green Party supports a universal, comprehensive, national single-payer health insurance program as the only solution to the current disastrous for-profit system. Let us begin to take the necessary steps to move in that direction right now—not continue to throw money into a failed program. Health care is a human right, not a privilege.

Sincerely,

Jean M. de Smet  
Co-Chair, Green Party of CT

1 "Health Care it's what ails us," a story by Doug Pibel and Sarah Van Gelder in the Fall 2006 issue of Yes! Magazine.

2 "The Case for Universal Health Care in the United States," Connecticut Coalition for Universal Health Care, 1999