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The 2023 Commonwealth Fund Health Care Affordability Survey asked insured and uninsured U.S. adults “How difficult, if at all, is it for you and your family to afford your health care costs?” and 51% responded that it was “very” or “somewhat difficult”.

Furthermore, from the same study, almost two out of five working-age adults (38%) reported that they had put off or even neglected medical care or prescribed medications due to their inability to afford care. Considering these results, many Americans have to stop and contemplate whether or not they can afford to receive necessary, maybe even life-saving care and treatment. They must ponder if healthcare is worth spending money on as if their life is a commodity. Yet, human life is not a commodity. However, certain flaws in American healthcare make it so, beginning with the fact that there is no nationally consistent medical system. To establish such, there needs to be a constitutional guarantee that all citizens deserve the right to easily accessible and affordable healthcare. Therefore, if I were to propose an amendment included in the Bill of Rights, I would add that quality healthcare is a necessary right of the people of the United States.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt drafted and proposed a Second Bill of Rights in 1944 which included a right to healthcare, but his death cut the action short. His wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, took this matter to the United Nations where it was developed. Following this, she was assigned as the drafting chairperson for the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which officially established our human rights and became an international standard. Article 25 of the UDHR specified the right of all humans to health, and this has prompted the adoption of universal healthcare systems ever since. The treaty does not discriminate based on financial stability, citizenship, or any other quality. Contrarily, American healthcare does, with price gouging, copayments, and other glaring shortcomings.

An amendment guaranteeing universal quality healthcare would ensure that healthcare is not a privilege limited to those who can afford it.

The U.S. spends more than double the amount per capita on healthcare as contrasted with the average of comparable nations. In 2022, we invested \$12,555, whereas the average for medical care spending was \$6,414 among similar wealthy countries (Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Australia, France, Sweden, Canada, Ireland, United Kingdom, Japan & Italy). This data from the Peter G. Peterson Foundation demonstrates that we spend abnormally high amounts on healthcare. Granted, every country has differences in economic, political, social, and all other aspects, yet this superfluous expenditure does not yield better health outcomes than other nations. In fact, in many regards, outcomes are worse here such as worse mortality and life expectancy. Healthcare spending is affected by the utilization of services and pricing. It seems logical that our rate of utilization would be higher as reflected in increased spending. However, U.S. service utilization rates are quite similar to those of other countries, leaving the only disparity to be our higher price of medical services.

With the introduction of an amendment that establishes a universal healthcare system and decreases disparities, I believe that we would have improved health outcomes, mirrored in increased life longevity, better quality of life, and greater access to medical care and health services. This would serve not only to decrease a myriad of comorbidities, but also work towards a more equitable future. Life is not a commodity, it is an unalienable right, and to protect this right, healthcare must be universal.

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