

Healthcare is a Human Right Platform & 2020 Pledge

Our healthcare system is in a moral and human rights crisis. Every year, thousands of families in Vermont are forced to choose between paying for healthcare versus paying for other human needs, while many of us who work in healthcare experience low wages and high levels of burnout.

The reasons for this crisis are clear: profit-seeking by insurance companies, pharmaceutical corporations, and big hospital networks, combined with tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy. Meanwhile, attacks on public programs threaten the most vulnerable in our communities and low- and middle-income people struggle with the skyrocketing cost of care.

Our healthcare system must guarantee everyone access to the care we need by treating healthcare as a public good and a human right. Vermont statute reads:

“The purpose of Green Mountain Care is to provide, as a public good, comprehensive, affordable, high-quality, publicly financed health care coverage for all Vermont residents in a seamless and equitable manner regardless of income, assets, health status, or availability of other health coverage.” (33 V.S.A. § 1821).

We call on Vermont’s elected officials to secure our human right to healthcare while working to abolish poverty, systemic racism, gender-based violence and other conditions that undermine our health and well-being.

Realizing our Human Right to Healthcare

A human rights approach means our healthcare system is guided by **human rights principles** of universality, equity, transparency, accountability, and participation.

Vermont’s healthcare system must meet these human rights principles:

Universality. *Everyone gets the care they need, when they need it.*

- Provide all necessary care, including dental, vision, hearing, reproductive care, gender-affirming care, disability services, long-term care, and mental health and

substance abuse treatment.

- Guarantee that all Vermont residents, including immigrants with and without documentation and people experiencing homelessness, can get care without exclusions.
- Ensure people can access healthcare where they live through sustaining rural hospitals, community health centers, and home and community based services.

Equity. *Healthcare is financed according to everyone's ability to pay and delivered according to need, without discrimination based on cost, privilege, or any other factor.*

- Establish progressive taxes to fully fund our universal healthcare system, so healthcare is free at the point of service.
- Ensure equity in the distribution of healthcare resources, requiring that payment and delivery reform prioritizes human health and well-being over all other factors.

Transparency, Participation, Accountability. *We all have a say in our healthcare, the system is clear and accessible, and all actors in the system are accountable to the people of Vermont.*

- Create transparent budgeting processes so people can see where their healthcare dollars are going.
- Facilitate the participation of patients in making decisions about their care.
- Ensure dignified wages and working conditions for healthcare workers, including safe staffing ratios and the right to unionize.
- Strengthen independent, public oversight over Vermont's hospitals, providers, and accountable care organizations, including a good-faith evaluation of alternatives to the All-Payer ACO Model Agreement when up for renewal in 2022.

2020 Pledge for Public Officials

We call on Vermont's public officials to take steps towards implementing healthcare as a human right by pledging to:

1. **Hold the line on Medicaid and Dr. Dynasaur:** No cuts, hurdles, or exclusions.
2. **Increase Medicaid reimbursement rates** for home and community based services to ensure raises for workers and continuity of care for beneficiaries.
3. **Hold the Green Mountain Care Board accountable** to fostering the health of rural communities by preventing the closure of hospitals and clinics.
4. **Produce a plan to implement the universal healthcare system** enacted in Act 48, beginning with a commissioned study on public financing mechanisms.

