

Health Health Care

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FCL supports the fundamental right of individuals and communities to strive for optimal physical health. Basic to that goal are: a healthy environment; access to nutritious and unpolluted food, air and water; adequate clothing and shelter; and full access to health services when required. Our first priority is the promotion of policies which ensure that no person or community be deprived of these basic necessities.

Prevention of disease and injury is the most humane and cost effective means to achieve good health. Among such measures are: prenatal care; immunizations; well-baby care; nutritional assistance in the form of food stamps, school breakfast and lunch programs, meals on wheels for the elderly and infirm, and nutritional assistance during pregnancy and lactation. Health education should be widely accessible for all ages in all languages spoken in the community. Substance abuse programs with a proven track record should be expanded and available to all addicted individuals regardless of ability to pay. FCL supports the full use of the state's resources in the areas of health research, education, and treatment. In response to the AIDS epidemic, FCL supports the added preventative measures of needle exchange programs, free and anonymous AIDS testing, and the distribution of free condoms.

To ensure equal access to preventative, therapeutic and emergency care, FCL supports the creation of a universal health care system in which all individuals have access to comprehensive care regardless of income, present or previous health status, employment status, immigration status, or prison status. The system should provide sufficient reimbursement to health care providers so the health care services are available to those who need them.

Until universal health care is achieved, public policies should encourage the availability of comprehensive health insurance at a reasonable cost that is not interrupted by changes in employment. Regulations protecting the patients' right to safe and timely care, affordable medicines, complete disclosure of their condition and options, privacy, protection of the medical records, and freedom to change providers and challenge denials of treatment must be vigorously advocated.

FCL recognizes that malpractice claims are a significant cause of increased insurance costs and hence higher overall medical costs. These costs should be brought down by greater policing of practitioners and the reduction of claims through the reduction of malpractice. FCL opposes tort "reform" that makes the pursuit of legitimate claims more difficult.

FCL opposes privatization of publicly financed medical facilities. FCL supports the continued appropriation of state funds for public hospitals, clinics, and medical schools.

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