Dear Task Force,

As a registered nurse I have seen people turn down life preserving therapy because they say they cannot afford it. This can be heartbreaking. For example, while working at a remote clinic in Alaska, I had a patient come in who was a fireman in New York City on 9-11. He was one of those who ran towards the twin towers instead of away from them. This resulted in him breathing toxic smoke which damaged his lungs. In the years since he has had chronic lung problems which have limited him. Still a young man, he and his new wife decide to take an Alaska Vacation in 2008. While in Alaska he suddenly has a respiratory episode that causes him to be unable to breath without supplemental oxygen. To get to a hospital from our clinic, his only options are his tour bus (without oxygen) to Anchorage, or an expensive medical flight to Fairbanks where he can get appropriate treatment. His insurance will not cover the flight so he is determined to take the bus. He repeatedly tries (and fails) to walk around the room without oxygen telling me that if he takes the flight it will bankrupt him. When the bus comes he tries to get on it but collapses. In the end he has to take the flight that will bankrupt him.

Health care is a basic human need and right. People should not have to make decisions like this. In the US our life expectancy is low compared to all other industrialized nations until we become 65. After age 65 suddenly our life expectancy, compared to industrialized nations, goes up. Why? Because that is the age we get Medicare! Many folks say we can't afford single payer (Medicare for all). The truth is we can't afford not to have single payer. The government already pays for 60% of healthcare

(Medicare, veterans, medicaid, teachers, firemen, police, etc.) If we eliminate the middle man (insurance companies) and negotiate escalating prices, we can have an affordable system that covers everyone.

Sincerely,
Dulce Havill

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