



Pocatello Free Clinic

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September 28, 2016

Healthcare Alternatives for Citizens Below
100 Percent of Poverty Level Working
Working Group Members
700 W. Jefferson Street
Boise, Idaho 83705

Dear Working Group Members,

My name is Mindy Hong. I am the Executive Director for the Pocatello Free Clinic. All of our patients are uninsured and 65% of the population at my clinic makes less than 100% of the FPL.

The first thing I want to make clear is that charity care options are not viable options to close the gap. My organization delivered \$740,000 in services last year on a \$168,000 budget. We do amazing things and that's a number that indicates how resourceful we are. It is also a number that is very small in comparison to the need that exists. There are 10 free clinics around the state. In order to provide just primary care to the entire gap population, you would need 145 clinics comparable in size to mine. The Pocatello Free Clinic has a staff of 7 and 11 board members with 30 degrees and a total of 122 years of experience with the very issue you are studying. We passed a resolution last winter reporting that charity care is not the answer and asking for a comprehensive solution.

I want you to ask yourselves a question. Do you know the population who you are making quality of life decisions for? Four years ago, I did not know these stories existed. Some days it is like stepping into a third world country. Last year, I had a new patient come in who had been in a terrible car wreck some years earlier and had received emergency surgical care. She could not follow up with the specialist due to her uninsured status. And for the past two years she had been living life with a metal pin inside the entire length of her index finger. It was meant to be removed weeks after her accident and had now protruded on both ends, resulting in two open, oozing wounds.

This is not my worst patient story, nor my most compelling, or heart wrenching. But this is one that is easily visualized. Many of these individuals are living with no quality of life in situations that are unimaginable. They have survived trauma and are still surviving. They are resilient and they are at my clinic because they want to be healthier.

Despite issues that exist in the healthcare system, most of us in this room have insurance. The 78,000 do not and I fear the underlying reasons are because of stereotypes and because they

are being used as pawns in political warfare. If the aim here really is to have fiscally responsible Idahoans who are hardworking citizens, then we need to close the coverage gap as soon as possible. Denying sick people access to consistent, comprehensive treatment does not help them meet their goals or yours.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Mindy Hong, Executive Director
Pocatello Free Clinic
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