

## Labor's Principles for Health Care Reform

**Together, with our unions and our allies, we will work to:**

1. **Guarantee affordable quality health care for all Californians.** Nearly seven million Californians lack health care coverage at some point during the year. As costs increase and more workers are being hired as independent contractors, temps, part-timers, and seasonal employees, employment based health care is eroding. Retirees are struggling to maintain coverage and many cannot afford needed medication. We oppose the reduction of retiree benefits. We will resist this race to the bottom by working to create a health care system that covers all Californians.
2. **Contain health care costs.** Health care costs have skyrocketed over the last few years. Pharmaceutical and insurance companies are two of the most profitable industries in the world and together they are diverting more and more of our health care spending away from services and toward administration, advertising and profits. We need greater transparency and oversight to better contain health care costs. We call for increased efficiency and an end to duplication with the workers' compensation system. Rather than maintain two health care systems – one if we are injured at work and one if we are injured at home – we should integrate workers' compensation medical treatment with employer-provided health care.
3. **Employers and government must join workers in sharing responsibility and risk.** Everyone – employers, the government, and individuals – must share the responsibility of health care for Californians. Working families already pay for a share of our own health care through sacrificed wage increases, a share of premiums, co-pays or deductibles. We should not have to shoulder the burden of increased costs and diminished care. The best way to improve health care is to pool risk by purchasing insurance collectively. Group purchasing of health insurance, prescription drugs, and hospital services can help keep health care costs down. Placing all the risk and responsibility on individuals will only shift costs onto the backs of families.
4. **Ensure patient choice and protect the doctor-patient relationship.** Medical decisions should be made by patients and their health care providers, free of interference from HMOs and insurance company bureaucrats. We will continue to fight to ensure that all Californians have the freedom to choose - and keep - their own doctor and have access to the care they need.
5. **Improve the quality of care.** Quality care means that an individual receives the right care, at the right time, resulting in the best possible health outcomes. Preventative care is essential to promoting good health and reducing costs to the system. Access to public safety net services must be maintained. In addition, we must ensure that all health care provides for a basic level of medically appropriate coverage.