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## **"Health Care: Basic Human Right or a Privilege?" a Public Forum Brings Advocates of Universal Coverage to New Haven , CT on Saturday, Oct. 13**

With Keynote Speakers: Dr. Stephanie Woolhandler, Harvard associate professor of medicine and Co-founder of Physicians for a National Health Program and John Wilhelm, President Hospitality Industry UNITE HERE Union

**NEW HAVEN** – Universal health care as a solution to the problems in the U.S. and Connecticut 's health care systems will be the topic of a public forum Saturday, Oct. 13 from 2-4 p.m. at the United Church in New Haven.

The forum titled **"Health Care: Basic Human Right or a Privilege?"** will feature national speakers Dr. Stephanie Woolhandler, a Harvard associate professor of medicine and cofounder of Physicians for a National Health Program, and UNITE HERE Hospitality Industry President John Wilhelm. A press conference with the keynote speakers will take place at the church from 1 to 1:30 p.m.

They will be joined by a community panel that will include House Majority Leader, state Rep. Christopher G. Donovan (D-Meriden) to discuss the viability of establishing universal health care in the country as well as in states like Connecticut. Also on the panel will be: David Benfer, president and CEO of St. Raphael Healthcare System; Melissa Bailey, New Haven Independent managing editor; and Crystal Emery, documentary producer, healthcare consumer and advocate.

"Simply put, Connecticut's health care system is failing growing numbers of residents, whether they are insured, underinsured or uninsured," said Juan A. Figueroa, president of Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut, a co-sponsor of the forum. "Connecticut residents pay 20 percent of the state's total health care expenses out-of-pocket. High co-pays, high deductibles and limited coverage are causing more and more people to forego medical care," he said.

Dr. Woodhandler said, "My number one priority in U.S. health care at this time is guaranteeing universal financial access to care and shedding light on the extremely high administrative costs of a market-based health care system, as well as the tremendous administrative saving possible under national health insurance."

(more)

The 2008 presidential election has renewed the national debate on reforming the U.S. health care system. Some of the issues triggering the national debate:

- Forty-seven million Americans are without health insurance: more than 400, 000 in Connecticut .
- Lack of health insurance causes roughly 18,000 unnecessary deaths every year in the United States .
- Although the U.S. leads the world in spending on health care, it is the only industrialized nation without universal coverage.
- The World Health Organization ranks the United States health system #37, after all European nations, Canada and Japan .
- Inability to pay medical bills is the leading cause of personal bankruptcy in the U.S. according to a Harvard University study.

The forum will be moderated by Between The Lines and WPKN Radio producers: Scott Harris, Denise Manzari and Melinda Tuhus. A reception honoring the work of Dr. Woolhandler and Mr. Wilhelm will take place directly after the forum from 4 to 5 p.m. at the United Church on the Green's reception hall.

The suggested contribution for the forum is \$10. Advance tickets for the reception are \$35 per person. Appetizers, wine and beer will be served.

Call (203) 268-8446 ext. 3 for reservations, directions and information or visit [www.squeakywheel.net](http://www.squeakywheel.net) or [www.btlonline.org](http://www.btlonline.org). Connecticut Health Foundation and Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut are co-sponsors of this event.

For more information on Connecticut Health Foundation, visit [www.cthealth.org](http://www.cthealth.org). The Web site of Universal Health Care Foundation is [www.universalhealthct.org](http://www.universalhealthct.org). For more information on UHCF's statewide campaign, healthcare4every1, visit [www.healthcare4every1.org](http://www.healthcare4every1.org).