

“Health care is a human right”

IYSSE speaks at health care rally at University of Illinois Chicago

Our reporters
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On Tuesday afternoon the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) spoke at a rally for universal health care at the University of Illinois Chicago. The rally was originally organized by a student member of the People’s Lobby, a Chicago organization with ties to the Bernie Sanders wing of the Democratic Party, promoting a single-payer “Medicare for All” reform of health care.

In attendance were various organizations in the orbit of the Democratic Party, including the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), activists from the Democratic Party, and the Illinois Single Payer Coalition (ISPC). More than a dozen students gathered around the rally, while other students stopped to listen as they were passing by. The IYSSE set up an information table at the rally and distributed leaflets with a socialist perspective for universal health care and other literature.

The rally organizer, Joe Padilla, a member of UIC Student Action, the student wing of the Chicago-based People’s Lobby, spoke out against the Republican-sponsored bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. While he pointed out the bill was headed to a defeat, the solution he proposed would entail universal health care reform along the lines of a single-payer system. Other speakers from the ISPC and the DSA promoted similar reformist proposals, without speaking about the role of the Democratic Party or its reactionary attacks on health care.

A representative of the IYSSE, George Gallanis, spoke out against the attacks being carried out on health care by both Democrats and Republicans. He declared, “The Democrats, just as much as the Republicans, are

bought and paid for by the giant insurance, pharmaceutical corporations. To the degree that they have differences it is over how deep the cuts should be. They both defend, however, the right of profit to dominate over the health care needs of millions of people.”

Gallanis exposed the reactionary character of Obamacare and the fact that it was in practice a transfer of funds “from the working class to corporations and the state.” He noted that the bill sponsored by Sanders for a single-payer “Medicare for All” system was little more than a fraud. He explained that not only would it have no chance to pass in a Republican-controlled Congress, it was also backed by Democrats bought and paid for by the insurance industry. Gallanis added that even if a single-payer system were somehow to be implemented, against all odds, it would still be woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the population, given that Medicare has been significantly privatized over the years.

In conclusion, Gallanis proposed the IYSSE’s socialist response to the crisis in health care. He insisted that health care is a social right and it could only be won by the fight for socialism, in opposition to both parties of big business. It would entail the mobilization of youth and students to fight for all the social rights of the working class on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program.

After the rally, the IYSSE spoke to students about the socialist solution to the health care crisis.

Peyton, a finance student, stated, “I don’t know what I would do if I wasn’t on my mom’s health insurance plan now. I work full time, but I have to pay for my tuition and books and I couldn’t afford health

insurance. Obviously the Affordable Care Act wasn't the best solution. I get my birth control for free now. I grew up in the South Side of Chicago in a working class community, and went to school with low-income students. I think when you talk about health care, we need to help low income communities with chronic health issues, such as cardiovascular disease. So I think we need huge changes and reforms for health care."

Mirza, a student walking by at the time of the rally said, "I think the attack on health care is outrageous. They want to take away care for the unfortunate and those that need it most. They are going to come up with a system where the insurance companies will profit most off this. People that cannot afford health care will die, it's as simple as that. And for those that need to go to a hospital, even with insurance, the costs will go up. I absolutely think health care is a social right. But I understand that the companies are just interested in making money. They will hurt those with pre-existing conditions. I have lost hope in this political system."

Mauricio spoke about the need for resources to be allocated to provide universal health care for all. "Some people think it's a privilege, but I think it's a right," he said. "You can see there are some people that are living in poverty and that don't have easy access to the health care system, or it gets too expensive so they can't really get access. If we could just take some money from the military budget; three percent of the GDP goes to the military, and that's still quite a lot, and we still have the largest military. It's actually the strongest by far. I feel that if we cut back on military expenses for healthcare it would be more beneficial."

Eva also agreed. "Yes, there is money for health care, but they like to hide it. And there's so much money that's put into for-profit prisons. We have so much mass incarceration that doesn't need to be done. The thing is, they (the wealthy) don't like to pay their taxes. And if the one percent would pay their taxes there would be a lot of money for health care, which is a human right."



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