

Activists arrested protesting at Cigna Health

Four Mass-Care activists were arrested at Cigna's offices in Newton this fall, as part of a delegation of 11 health care advocates who were asking Cigna HealthCare executives to sign a pledge saying that they would not:

- use patients' premium dollars to lobby against universal health reform
- stand between a doctor and patients
- discriminate against enrollees based on pre-existing conditions, age, ethnicity, gender, immigration status or any other social status

Instead of meeting with the delegation—which included a doctor, a teacher, a nursing student, a patient, a veteran, a student and representatives from local single payer advocacy groups—Cigna instructed police to arrest the group if they attempted to enter the property. Many of the delegation carried Mass-Care posters and wore signs on their backs reading “Cigna Profit\$, Patients Suffer.”



Sandy Eaton, RN, discussed the day's events with Lorie Miller, a student nurse who was arrested for her involvement.

Eaton: Well, Lorie, tell us a little about yourself.

Miller: I am a student nurse at Simmons College in Boston and I will be graduating in December of 2010. I am in an accelerated second degree program, with a bachelor's in international studies, with a focus on education, and a minor in French. I decided to come to Boston three years ago to go to school, and then I decided to go into nursing.

Eaton: What made you decide to go into nursing?

Miller: I was drawn to the holistic approach seen among fellow students in the prerequisite courses, other people who were changing their careers. I come from a liberal arts/international affairs background, so I have developed a world-



The protestors—proud and confident—after being released.

view. I am excited to be going into nursing.

Eaton: Is this the first time you've been arrested?

Miller: Yes.

Eaton: What moved you to get involved this way?

Miller: The timing had a lot to do with it. We have great opportunities right now, with all the discussion regarding health care, but it is so frustrating. The demonstration in October put the focus on the people who are blocking change, the insurance companies, and the fact that they are spending profits from denying care to lobby against change. The level of misinformation and emotion is very high. We need to come back with a strong action, against Cigna and the other companies that deny care.

Eaton: As a student nurse, what role do you see here for patient advocacy?

Miller: Right now I am focused on studies and clinicals. One of my reasons for going into nursing is the desire to practice holistic care, which includes caring about the financial situations of families ... who is going to pay for medications, etc. That is the reason I

went into nursing. I not only want to advocate for individual patients, but advocate for bigger change—change in policy. I have been working with the Simmons College Student Nurses Association, which sponsored a forum on healthcare on campus on Oct. 8.

Eaton: Describe the forum.

Miller: The forum featured Benjamin Day (executive director of Mass-Care) and Judith Shindul-Rothschild (past president of MNA and associate professor of nursing at Boston College). I have now joined Mass-Care and will continue to work for change.

Eaton: Some would argue that nurses and their organizations should keep their focus narrow and local in terms of patient advocacy and collective action. What do you think?

Miller: I do not buy into that and I do not see any reason we cannot do both. Nurses need to come together in collective action regarding how we do our job. But right now timeliness is important. We have somewhat of an open door with the administration. We have some openings in Congress. We need to be there as practitioners to fight for what is going to work for us and for our patients. ■

AFL-CIO endorses single payer Medicare for all

In a unanimous vote, the AFL-CIO endorsed the single payer Medicare for all approach to healthcare reform as the “most cost-effective and equitable way to provide quality healthcare for all.”

The resolution capped a successful effort led by the Labor Campaign for Single Payer and other groups to put the AFL-CIO on record rejecting private insurance and in support of a social insurance model for healthcare reform. The MNA played a strong role in the founding of the LCSP in January.

The resolution passed shortly after Presi-

dent Obama addressed the convention meeting in Pittsburgh in September. The vote capped several days of enthusiastic organizing at the convention.

Jeff Crosby, president of the North Shore (Mass.) Labor Council said that he was proud that the federation will assume “moral leadership” of the movement for healthcare for all and of how important that leadership is for our allies in the community. ■



Labor Campaign for Single Payer:
laborforsinglepayer.org