Testimony before the Office of the Healthcare Advocate

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Good morning/afternoon everyone. My name is Barbara Albert, registered voter, renter in Hartford, and advocate for human rights. I have several serious chronic medical challenges, this also includes mental illnesses. I am on Social Security Disability, Medicare, Medicaid, and I am a client of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. I do volunteer work on the neighborhood, city, State, national and global levels when able. I did work before my illnesses became too overwhelming.

I am unable to be present today because I have surgery this morning. When I was nine, my tonsils were supposed to be removed. Because part of one is still there, creating all kinds of complications, I am not there and am still grateful for friends with Keep the Promise Coalition that at least this is being submitted and hopefully read-we'll see.

I am also very grateful to all who helped get the "Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act", federally passed in 2008.

Unfortunately, in 2012, as we all know, in reality, parity and equity still does not exist in most any kind of healthcare. I will not go into how many doctors I have, or what all my illnesses are. I will either die from my illnesses, or because insurance corporations will continue to deny safety, humanity. They will exist as the inhumane entities, NOT as human beings.

I believe insurance corporations need to be nonprofit. I have been, somehow, surviving, being forced to deal with insurance denials since the end of the 1980s. I have four denial letters from the last two weeks concerning post-op pain medication, time has run out, so have options. (Perhaps, so have I).

Due to being "guinea pigged" through a vast variety of medications for the last thirty years, I've developed allergies and sensitivities and even more medical challenges. Anything my doctor has prescribed that could help with the pain of having a sizable portion of my throat removed has been denied. Generics, particularly the fillers, do not make them the same quality to someone who has known allergies and sensitivities—the body knows the difference. Examle: "They need for me to have proof of whether two different manufacturers generics, if they are ineffective or don't make me throw up, or make blood come out of me. Another example is that I have a third degree burn allergic reaction to anything with latex products in it. If condoms needed prescriptions, I would need to use a second manufacturer's brand, also to see if I still get bloody blisters. Doing things over and over and expecting different results is the basic definition of insanity. I believe my physician's signature IS prior authorization. They are knowledgeable about healthcare. They are knowledgeable about MY medical history.

Insurance corporations lack this knowledge. Corporations lack humanity. Corporations are NOT human beings. They get paid to make money, cut costs, deny—which equals insanity.

Dorothy Day, a social justice activist once said, "Our problems stem from our acceptance of this filthy rotten system."

Preventative care? Good idea. Always needed to be. It's less expensive, and healthier than crisis or catastrophic "management", I am one of way too many who continues to be lost in an abyss. There was no "crack", ever to fall through. I'd rather be here today to learn I'm not alone, also that steps are in process to change the cold unfeeling inhumanity that is our healthcare system.

Ever been called a "Gomer" in an emergency room? I have. It means get out of my emergency room. I'd rather be in a body bag than an E.R., and I have been in a body bag. A lot of people still have nowhere to go for any kind of medical care.

Going to a pharmacy with a prescription from one of my physicians, waiting for the "ok" or denial from the insurance, I have a panic disorder, which continues to "beat the Christmas rush." While I continue to cry, and want to strike out, or self mutilate, while I walk out, empty handed again. Of course, aggravating lots of my other medical challenges. Having irritable bowel, for instance, controls everything. This is not quality of life. It is not being a participant in life. I want; I need to feel alive, before I die.

I feel very great concern for many who have allergies and sensitivities who have already been through "guinea pigging" for whatever medical challenges, for what works best for their body. I have not been in a psych hospital for over twelve years. I am struggling, BIG, with the ongoing changes with the Affordable Care Act. I am not against it. I fear the already overflow in institutions (hospitals, jails) increasing homelessness, and already far too many needless deaths. Hopelessness. However, I'm still here. I don't know how I am still here.

This includes people with or without any kind of insurances or assurance. This concerns any kind of medical need, whether it be for anxiety, Alzheimer's, birth control bladder infections, cancer, congestive heart failure… Do I need to go on?

For humanities sake, please prove me wrong.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Of all forms of inequality, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and inhumane."

Thank you for listening.