

George Knauer Testimony

NYS Senate Joint Hearing on New York Health Act

May 28, 2019

My name is George Knauer. I was a small business owner. I am an author, and I have had personal experience with both government-run health care while caring for two of my brothers, and private health insurance for my own critical medical care. I can tell you, the difference is startling.

Both of my brothers suffered from Huntington's disease. While fighting for appropriate care for them, I too became critically ill with sepsis and a stroke, which resulted in sudden blindness. Two years later, I was again critically ill after a fall from a third story window. Years after that, I underwent knee surgery, and a few years after that, I had back surgery.

The difference in navigating the two systems -- for myself and for my brothers -- was like night and day. On the private insurance side, everything was covered and I was able to focus on my recovery, not on what would be covered. My health plan, CDPHP, had my history and coordinated the care I needed. They were available to answer my questions and keep me on track. CDPHP provided me with a nurse case manager, a dietician, and a pharmacist, all of whom I spoke with routinely about my care.

By contrast, in dealing with my brothers' care, the "system" was cumbersome and non-responsive. It seemed that unless I initiated things, nothing was done to meet my brothers' needs. The battle turned out to be less about dealing with Huntington's and more about battling providers and the government-run Medicaid program.

From that experience, I believe that a single payer system run under government auspices would collapse of its own weight. Twice already, the federal government has shut down. Meanwhile, here in New York, taxes are so high that small business owners, as I once was, are fighting to stay alive. The increased tax burden -- combined with a decrease in quality of care -- makes single payer an absurd idea. From what I have seen, a single payer system provides health insurance, and not much more. A private insurance system has more options and offers a health CARE team available to you 24/7 and can make appropriate referrals.

Choice matters!