

## Let's Get Healthy Goes International

### Resolution 04-12

**Proposal:**

Submit Resolution on behalf of the SEIU-UHW Executive Board to the 25<sup>th</sup> SEIU International Convention and seek co-sponsorship from other healthcare locals in SEIU.

**Background information:**

SEIU will hold its 25<sup>th</sup> International Convention in Denver, Colorado May 28- 30, 2012. It is customary for local unions to submit resolutions on issues they believe are important for action by the entire union. The deadline for submitting resolutions is May 1, 2012.

SEIU-UHW' Let's Get Healthy California Campaign has been very successful as we have made significant progress on:

- winning an Executive Order from the Governor's office making it the official policy of the state to fight chronic disease;
- advancing legislation to revamp the homecare system to make it more effective for workers and clients in managing chronic health conditions;
- negotiating ground breaking contract language to improve the collective health of the healthcare workforce;
- utilizing a \$930,000 grant from the California Endowment to do enrollment and healthcare policy work in South Los Angeles;
- promoting awareness in our communities and with our allies on strategies to improve healthcare and thereby capturing the attention of media, elected leaders and the hospital industry.

SEIU members across the country would clearly benefit from a similar effort.

- The last SEIU convention was marred by divisive, negative resolutions from the former leadership of UHW that pitted UHW members against the rest of the union. A positive resolution that promotes the good work we have been doing as a national model for the country would make a strong statement that UHW is back as a proud member of the SEIU family.

- As a way to build unity, UHW can ask other SEIU locals with similar interests to co-sponsor the resolution.

Be it resolved that SEIU-UHW Executive Board submit this resolution for consideration by the SEIU International Convention.

## Let's Get Healthy!

The right to quality healthcare for all is one of the most important building blocks of a just and humane society for the 99 percent. But in multiple ways, the welfare of working people in the United States is endangered by a healthcare system in deep crisis:

- More than 50 million people have no health insurance;
- Lack of coordinated care drives up costs and lowers quality;
- Health care is worse in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color;
- Healthcare debt is the biggest cause of personal bankruptcies among the 99 percent;
- A tsunami of chronic diseases that are largely preventable and manageable – such as asthma, depression, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and obesity – will overwhelm the healthcare system and our ability to finance it;
- Our healthcare system is threatened by a massive increase in long-term care needs and by our patchwork and underfunded system to care for seniors and people with disabilities;
- Soaring healthcare costs eat away at wages and benefits for the 99 percent, threatening SEIU members in virtually every new contract we negotiate; and
- We spend the majority of healthcare dollars treating diseases on the back end, when people are sick and costs are high, instead of investing in wellness and prevention programs that keep people from getting sick in the first place.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act takes concrete steps to correct many of these problems. It is both the most important social legislation and the most important civil rights legislation in the United States in nearly 50 years. For the first time, it makes healthcare for all a *right*, not a privilege.

But the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is in danger of being struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court. And even if it survives and is fully implemented, we will need to lead, as union members and healthcare workers, to keep the 99% healthy and hold costs down.

SEIU members recognize that we are uniquely positioned to lead an effort to make people healthier by working in concrete ways within our union and in our communities to battle chronic disease, health inequities, and rising healthcare costs; to ensure access to quality healthcare; to build a coherent system of long-term care that is well-funded, coordinated, and meets our growing needs; and to shift our healthcare system to one that elevates prevention and wellness as a strategy to make people healthier and lower costs.

### **Therefore be it resolved:**

SEIU members can lead to achieve two vitally important goals:

- First, expand our role as a union by becoming a recognized leader on improving the health of the 99%, fixing problems in the healthcare system, and holding down costs.

- Second, utilize our role as a premier healthcare organization operating in the public interest to capture the hearts and minds of members, increase our connection to non-union workers, and demonstrate how a union can be a force for positive change in our communities.

SEIU members will hold our employers and the healthcare industry accountable to lowering costs, improving access and care, providing coordinated care, and recognizing that unions have an important role to play in making our healthcare system strong and effective.

SEIU members will further lead by ensuring that we are doing everything we can to keep *ourselves* healthy, including promoting healthy lifestyles among SEIU members and our families, and bargaining wellness and prevention programs into our contracts in a positive way by using rewards rather than punishments. We will make union members and healthcare workers role models for a healthier society and demonstrate our leadership, while holding down costs and improving our own wages and health benefits.

SEIU members can demonstrate our leadership on improving health in a variety of ways, including:

- Bargaining leadership roles in our contracts for members to work with their co-workers to create a healthier workforce or play ambassador roles to promote health in our communities.
- Partnering with community allies, foundations, and sports teams to promote healthier lifestyles.
- Enrolling people in underserved neighborhoods in health insurance and other health programs for which they qualify.
- Seeking executive orders and sponsoring legislation and ballot initiatives to solve the healthcare crisis, take on chronic disease, and bring down costs.
- Sponsoring health fairs and education programs in schools, churches and community settings to promote wellness and prevention.