

## Owen Gilroy, NY Health Act Testimonial

Good morning State legislators, Kingstonians, and New York residents. I'm speaking today at the behest of Caring Majority, as well as my sisters and brothers in the Democratic Socialists of America. I am also here as a lifelong Hudson Valley resident and a farmer, attesting to the experience of New York State farm workers like myself, and to the deplorable conditions we live in thanks to our state's current healthcare system

Let me begin with my own story. E. Working six days a week in the field, I frequently pull deer ticks off my body. Deer ticks are the notorious carriers of Lyme Disease, and they're simply a part of life for farmers, as well as anyone who works out of doors in this state.

If untreated, the effects of Lyme Disease can be crippling, but it's easy to treat - so long as it's addressed quickly.

Last year I contracted Lyme Disease, and thanks to the bare-bones healthcare plan that I can afford, I had to endure a stressful, humiliating search across three counties for a doctor who would accept my insurance and provide me with the treatment I needed. Thanks to this delay, what would have been a single day of preventative treatment became a month-long ordeal of discomfort, poor health, and lost opportunity.

I'm one of the fortunate ones - I had a treatable condition and eventually got the care I needed. But there are tens of thousands of workers who live with serious health issues they cannot afford to have treated because they have weak insurance plans, or no insurance at all. Workers like me live in fear that a single accident could not only destroy our ability to work, but cause us financial catastrophe, even the loss of our land and homes. Our lives and livelihoods are at risk every day, and all because of New York's for-profit healthcare industry. To put it simply, there will never be a shareholder who sees a profit in insuring someone who does manual labor for a living - and so, if left unaided, we will never receive adequate protection under the system such as it stands.

This is unconscionable.

We are the people who grow New York's food. We tend our State's farms and forests. We earn our living by the sweat of our brow, and precisely because of this we are denied the healthcare which would allow us a level of stability befitting people who work as hard as we do. Do we not deserve the same quality of care as anyone else? Do we not deserve the basic dignity of being able to see a doctor when we are ill? Do we not have the right to a life of health and happiness that all of us should be entitled to?

The awful deficiencies of for-profit healthcare leave us no solution besides a single payer system, one which makes the whole state of New York our provider network. Under the New York Health Act, our health care providers would offer cheaper, better, more complete primary and preventative care, with all medical services being paid for on a global rather than a fee-for-service basis. No one should have their income level as a limiting factor to quality care,

But as long as profitability decides who does and does not receive care, millions will go without it.

Under the New York Health Act, the vast majority of workers I know would be spared the financial burden laid upon them by rising premiums, deductibles, and copays, not to mention the staggering costs incurred by limited provider networks and out-of-pocket expenses. No longer would employees have to rely on the good graces of their employer for decent coverage, nor employers have to constantly negotiate for a more reasonable plan in a shifting market. Instead, New Yorkers could save money, time, and precious health and peace of mind knowing that all hospitals and clinics in the state were accessible to them. The money for a network that covers all New Yorkers is there, and a progressive tax structure like the one built into this bill will ensure the longstanding viability this program.

On behalf of myself and my peers, I fully endorse the New York Health Act, and implore my neighbors to do so full-heartedly. Through my words today, and through my work in the fields, I wish for nothing less than a healthy and revitalized public in our home state. I work hard to provide food to New York's people not because there's great fortune in it, but because I love what I do. I want to continue to work the land, grow crops, and feed my community. The New York Health Act will ensure that I and millions of my working class brothers and sisters can support our neighbors in good health for decades to come. Thank you all.