

Chi Anunwa, NYC Democratic Socialists of America (DSA)
Testimony for NYHA Legislative Hearing - October 23, 2019

Hello, everyone. My name is Chi Anunwa, and I am one of the co-chairs of the New York City Democratic Socialists of America. I'd like to thank the New York State Assembly and Senate for giving us the chance to testify on behalf of the New York Health Act today. I also want to thank all the wonderful single payer advocates and coalition partners who are sharing their testimony and healthcare stories today.

Today, I'd like to speak on one thing that I think many of us in the movement for single payer and the movement for the New York Health Act sometimes avoid addressing explicitly, and that is the topic of class war. To put it simply, the fight for single payer is a class war. People speak of healthcare as if it is this very complex, intractable problem. But it's actually quite simple. For far too long, the rich and the corporate interests in the healthcare industry have treated the health of the working class like it's their personal playground.

Too many people in our state and in this country have to choose between paying rent, paying for food, and paying exorbitant premiums and deductibles for health insurance every month. As another example, turning 26 has become a potential death sentence for my diabetic friends as many of them are too underinsured to afford a consistent supply of insulin. Even seemingly comfortable middle class families can be one medical emergency away from bankruptcy. And the only reason we have this status quo is because the corporate class has for so long chosen to gamble with our health in pursuit of maximizing profit and greed.

But finally things are starting to change. There has never been as much momentum in our state and in our country as a whole for single payer healthcare. Finally, people are starting to realize that healthcare should be a human right and that the commodification of healthcare goes against basic human welfare.

And so the question for the New York State legislature is actually quite simple. Will you choose to stand on the right side of history and stand with the people against the rich and the corporate class in the class war that is not only depriving working class people of a right to healthcare but also housing, education, and a livable planet? Or will you stand with the rich and their interests in the healthcare industry, even as people are literally dying due to their greed? The choice is yours and I hope you choose wisely. Thank you.