

Statement of Ken Blair
Before the Hospital and Healthcare Roundtable, Connecticut General Assembly
November 20, 2014

Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting UNITE HERE to participate in this discussion. I would like to explain what we have done here in local 217 to help lower and maintain lower healthcare cost for our fellow union members.

1, In my shop at our last contract negotiations we dropped our for-profit insurance company and switched over to our union sponsored insurance plan. By taking this action we were able to reduce our premiums so much that the we were able to have the company pay 100% of our premiums we had been paying a 20-80% split prior to this. This was done for single-single plus one-and for family plans. We didn't just save money for our workers, but the company I work for was able to save around a 70-80 thousand dollars even after going to 100% company paid.

2, We now have a statewide insurance committee.

The purpose of the committee is to educate our fellow workers on the different things we need to do to help keep our health care cost down. We do this with our 1-2-3 program.

The first step in this plan is to fill out a health survey.

The second step is helping the workers that do not have a Primary Care doctor.find one. We sit down with them and help them get one. We then have them set up an appointment and tell us when they are going so we can follow up with them after to make sure they kept their appointment.

The third part of this is we give them paperwork to get their biometrics done at their appointment. The results are sent to one of our health plan's health care coordinators.

We are not just saving money, we are also helping our members enjoy a better, healthier lifestyle. One of my fellow workers told me that because of my nagging him to get an appointment he finally did get an appointment to get me off his back. But after seeing his doctor, he decided to make some changes in his life, and in the first year lost 40 pounds.

We also have a Better Living program. This is a 6 week program that members with the same chronic illnesses meet once a week to learn how to manage their illnesses.

Our union has even helped the members with lowering prescription cost by working with stores like CVS and Stop & Shop. These pharmacies are willing to work with us and give our members a better price. .

I feel that we are on the right path to helping our members with managing not just their health, but their healthcare costs with our education and action plans that we have in place.

Please don't let all our hard work and effort be for naught by allowing these hospital monopolies to charge unreasonable prices and run over our state health care options.