

OPINION &gt; COLUMNISTS

# My Word | Single payer is the solution, but can we afford it?

By **PATTY HARVEY** |

February 10, 2021 at 12:00 p.m.

---

Health care today is expensive. Can we provide it to every resident? Who will pay? We have only to look at the rest of the industrialized democracies of the world to see the answer. In other countries, people pay with their taxes, which in turn gives them equitable access to the care they need, that everyone needs at one time or another over a lifetime. In other countries, there are no middlemen making a profit by simply paying (or trying not to pay) the bills.

More taxes? Also worrisome. But how many are aware that what we pay now into federal and state programs for healthcare would provide the vast majority of what would be needed to supply universal health care under a public, single-payer plan. A small, progressive tax would pay the rest. How small? A Senate bill in the house (S. 1129) proposes a family of four with an income of \$60K would pay about \$5K. That same family now pays upwards of \$20K in premiums, co-pays, deductibles—the out-of-pocket bills that insurance won't cover. That's a 75% savings.



Scores of economic studies on single payer have been analyzed through universities, think tanks and medical institutes. The unanimous result is that a single-payer system, one that allows other countries to spend half of what the U.S. spends on health care, would save some \$650 billion per year in the U.S., according to the Congressional Budget Office. Even the most conservative (Koch Brothers' Mercatus Institute) finds a \$2 trillion savings over 10 years. It is important to ask what our costs would be without converting to a single-payer system — estimates confirm that it would be in the billions of dollars annually above what a universal, publicly paid system would cost.

Our current healthcare non-system is fragmented, inequitable, inefficient and dangerously expensive. Somewhere between a quarter and a third of our population have no access to medical care, being uninsured, underinsured or having lost insurance due to COVID-19 job losses. A cancer diagnosis can mean bankruptcy and homelessness. The attendant anxiety and stress over illness and medical bills contributes to further health declines. A society so crippled by such a loss of sufficient medical care cannot be productive or sound.

We must shore up the failing state of healthcare delivery in this nation, this nation with some of the very best medical knowledge and practices in the world, making it available to everyone. The pandemic has shown how a virus knows no political, social or ethnic boundaries. When one of us is vulnerable, everyone is. The question is not, can we afford to do this but rather, how can we afford not to?

Canada has a Medicare system that covers all residents from birth to death. It started in one province and spread by acclamation to the rest who could readily see the benefits. Canadians love their Medicare — just as we love ours, here, even in its pressing need for improvement. Canadians see our situation as unacceptable, where for-profit entities impose narrow networks, require pre-authorizations and deny care for pre-existing conditions and treatments that bureaucrats may decide are not covered.

In California we are uniquely situated to create a Medicare for All system because of our robust economy, the fifth largest in the world. But we must have the federal funds Californians now pay into healthcare programs like Medicare and Medicaid granted back to us. There is precedent and provisions in the ACA and Social Security for such waivers to be granted.



How can we promote such a move by our state? The many grass-roots organizations favoring a single-payer healthcare system in California are asking Gov. Newsom to remember his campaign promise when he said, “There is no need to wait for universal health care and single payer in California.” We are inviting the public to sign a request to Gov. Newsom to apply to the Biden Administration for the necessary federal waivers so that we can get started fixing health care in California. Please go to [petition.healthcare](https://petition.healthcare) to sign on to this request and be sure to watch the video that says it all. It is up to us to direct our legislators to act on our behalf—democracy is not something we have, but something we do. Let’s do it; let’s make California a bellwether to the nation.

For more information about single-payer health care:

- [healthcareforall.org](https://healthcareforall.org)
- [PNHP.org](https://PNHP.org)
- [healthcareforallhumboldt@mail.com](mailto:healthcareforallhumboldt@mail.com)

*Patty Harvey, HCA/PNHP-Humboldt, resides in Willow Creek.*



SPONSORED CONTENT

**2021 Mazda**



## **CX-30 2.5 Turbo Drive Review** [↗](#)

By Mazda Reviewed by  
Car and Driver



Mazda's upscale CX-30 subcompact crossover receives a welcome boost from a new 250-hp turbocharged engine.

---

