

Press Conference re: Resurrection Health Care
September 16, 2PM
120 N. La Salle St., 8th Floor
Chicago, Illinois

**STATEMENT BY AIXA REYES
UNINSURED PATIENT PLAINTIFF**

Age: 40

Residence: Hermosa neighborhood, Chicago

Income: \$1200 a month at the time of the first hospitalization, currently \$400-800 a month as a nursing home aid, depending on the number of hours worked.

Assets: None-- Section 8 apartment, no car, no savings.

Debt: Over \$8,000 to Resurrection's St. Mary of Nazareth and St. Elizabeth hospitals.

My name is Aixa Reyes. In 1999, I got sick and my daughter took me to St. Elizabeth hospital. At that time I worked for a vending machine company and made about \$1200 a month with no health benefits.

At the hospital they told me I had diabetes and high-blood pressure. They never told me what the charges were going to be, and they never asked me about my income or told me they could help me with the bill.

When the hospital bill came it was over \$3,000, and the bill collectors told me I had to pay off the whole amount. I couldn't afford to do that, so I asked them for a payment plan. They wouldn't agree to a payment plan I could afford, and they took me to court. At court the judge made them accept a \$50 a month payment plan. I paid \$575 to St. Elizabeth, but then I got laid off. When I stopped making payments, St. Elizabeth went back to court and tried to have my wages garnished which they couldn't do because I was unemployed. The bill collectors were calling all the time. When I tried to ask for someone who spoke Spanish they said "You don't need to speak Spanish to tell us you don't want to pay your bill." They also told me I should keep making payments from my unemployment check.

Because I have no insurance, I have to pay for my blood pressure medication, insulin and syringes myself. Some months I went without these things so I could make my payments. Because I can't afford the things I need to stay healthy, I had to go back to the hospital three more times—once to St. Mary of Nazareth and twice to St. Elizabeth.

It's not fair the way these hospitals treat people, and it's not right that uninsured people should have to pay so much more than people with insurance. I'm here today because I would like to make sure that what happened to me doesn't happen to anybody else.

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