

Losing My Job and My Health Insurance

Mary Oliver

Losing my job of 14 years was very hard for me because I have never been without a job in all my life. It might not have been the job of my dreams, but it did pay the bills, put food on the table, and put my son through school. Now I don't have enough money to get through the month. If it

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weren't for the help of my family, I would not be able to pay the bills. Unemployment benefits are just not enough. Since I lost my job, I also lost my health insurance. To keep my health insurance, I would have had to pay \$325 per month. I can't afford that. Not having health insurance is hard for me to handle because I have already had cancer twice. The last two years have been stressful because I have to go back and forth to Little Rock every three months for check-ups. The hos-

Did You Know?

Congress is considering a law that would provide Medicare for all. If passed, the National Health Insurance Act (HR 676) would cover primary care, dental, mental health, prescription drugs, and long-term care. Learn more about the bill. Discuss it with others. Let your congressperson know what you think. See Issue #28 of *The Change Agent* for more news and analysis on health care.

pital stays and motel expenses have taken a toll on me, my son, and my family.

I believe the government should have a cheaper health plan for people like me. I have worked all these years. I have paid all that money for insurance. And now it is just gone. When I got laid off, I also lost three weeks of vacation. That's about \$1300 — also gone.

One good effect of the layoff is that I am able to attend school and get my GED and learn about computers. I have been wanting to get my GED for a long time. It is much easier to study fully each day without having to work. The opportunity to learn about computers is good for me because I know nothing about them, and I don't have one at home. I like being able to go to school and have a teacher show me how to work with a computer.

I am handling the economic crisis in the best way I know. I am using this opportunity to go to school. I'm so glad that my son is already grown and on his own. Now he is helping me. I am praying that the cancer doesn't come back which is a big worry for me.

Mary Oliver is a student at the Fort Smith Adult Education Center in Fort Smith, Arkansas. This is the first essay she has ever written, and she is grateful to her teacher, Ms. Newhart, for helping to make it possible.



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