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Letter by Dr. Weisbuch Published in the Phoenix Business Journal, May 23, 2008

To the Editor:

Re: St. Joseph Hospital plan to transfer coma patient.

The attempt by St. Joseph Hospital and Medical Center to transfer an uninsured, comatose, post-partum woman to Honduras, defines a major problem with our healthcare system. Money is more important than patient needs, compassion, or a commitment to do no harm. Medical care is a profit-oriented business. It is no longer a calling to care for the sick, the injured or the dying. The charity hospital system no longer provides much charity.

In this market driven, profit oriented system, unless you are acutely ill in a hospital emergency room, you will be denied care unless you can demonstrate your ability to pay for services. Sonia del Cid Iscoa's family is learning that her needs are secondary to the St. Joseph Hospital's bottom line. Fortunately for Sr. Iscoa, she took a turn for the better and has been allowed to stay at St. Joe's - for now.

An answer does exist, however, in Arizona. Representative Phil Lopes' HB 2668, if enacted by the legislature, would resolve the problem facing Sonia del Cid Iscoa and others confronted with medical problems they cannot afford. Under Mr. Lopes bill, all residents would have access to the care they need, all physicians would be fairly reimbursed, and no hospital patient would be uninsured.

Our legislators seem unwilling to listen to the needs of Senora del Cid Iscoa, and others who through no fault of their own, find themselves unable to afford the medical care they did not realize they would need. We should ask our legislators why HB 2668 has not been debated in committee, marked up, sent to the floor and voted upon.

Polls show that 80% of Arizonans want system change; even 59% of doctors want a universal system. And yet we get no action from our representatives. In this election year, maybe we should demand candidates to support health reform for all.