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Social Justice in Health Care: The Supreme Court?s Decision

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On Thursday June 28, young people across the United States celebrated a somewhat unexpected decision from the United States Supreme Court upholding the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act ?more commonly known as President Obama?s health care reform law. This historic law is arguably the most beneficial federal legislation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people we have ever had. It expands health insurance coverage for our communities, works towards ending anti-LGBTQ discrimination within the health care system, and sets aside billions of dollars for prevention programs that directly impact our communities.

But what does this mean for young people?

THE GOOD:

- If your parent(s) or guardian(s) have health insurance, you can continue to have health insurance through them up to age of 26.
- The law will provide health insurance coverage for 32 million Americans who were uninsured in the past. People of color make up half of the uninsured population, so there are very real outcomes for Americans.
- There will be more money for prevention programs likes Community Transformation Grants, many of which are serving LGBTQ people.

- The law also protects us from increasingly abusive health insurance companies who put profits before people.
- The law pushes for more culturally competent health care and helps prevent discrimination against LGBTQ people and people living with HIV/AIDS.

THE BAD:

Medicaid (called MediCal in California) is a health insurance program that is funded by both the federal government and individual states. Originally, the law told states that if they did not cover more people with lower incomes that the federal government would remove their funding. The Supreme Court, however, struck down this part of the law.

Medicaid is an extremely important program for a lot of communities, and three out of every four people who use Medicaid are people of color. The Supreme Court's decision means that these communities are now, more than ever, at the mercy of their states? political whims. Governors from more conservative states across the nation are already threatening Medicaid programs. If these programs are significantly reduced, this will likely create larger racial and economic gaps in access to health care. So while there is a lot to celebrate about the decision, health care access continues to be a major social justice issue of our time.

For more information, check out:

The Center for American Progress [1]

The National Coalition for LGBT Health [2]

ColorLines [3]

GSA Network LGBTQ Sexual Health Information [4]

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