

Patient compensation board is being corrupted by corporate interests

BY EZRA SPITZER
ALBUQUERQUE RESIDENT

I held my daughter in my arms as she took her last breath. The injuries that resulted in her death should not have happened. They were the result of negligent acts inside a health care system prioritizing profits over the well-being of patients and doctors.

Because most doctors are trapped inside systems that do not allow them to make quality decisions and instead, patients are harmed and injured.



Ezra Spitzer

Ever since then, I have taken every opportunity to advocate for families like mine, to ensure that systems are in place to protect patients and for the responsible entities to be held accountable when they

cause harm. It's what led me to be a part of the work to create the Patient Compensation Advisory Board and be appointed as the first Patient Representative.

Now, after three years on the board, I have resigned because I am no longer able to stand by as the board

makes a mockery of objectivity. The Patient Compensation Fund was created to help families like mine and ensure that patients receive reasonable compensation if they have been injured due to medical negligence.

But for decades, the state has refused to charge premiums recommended by actuaries to cover these costs. Instead, within the last three years alone, the state has poured almost \$100 million of our taxpayer money into the Patient Compensation Fund. The burden of ensuring patients are protected has fallen almost exclusively on the taxpayers' shoulders.

Of the nine members on the PCF Advisory Board, only two are patient representatives, while the majority of the members are hospital and health care industry representatives. Not only that, but the board meetings are held at the New Mexico Hospital Association. A board created to represent and advocate for patients is essentially run by special interests looking to carve out corporate welfare benefits.

The Patient Compensation Fund is not something that everyday New Mexicans are familiar with and most would be shocked to learn we have

put almost \$100 million into this fund to help hospitals cover malpractice claims instead of investing in our state and our local communities.

I hope that more people start to look closely at the current state of our health care system and start to ask themselves why we have allowed corporations to come in and buy up our local hospitals. Why have we allowed them to dictate the type of care available to us, to demand too much from our doctors and those responsible for our care, to drive out our local providers, and then victimize us further when life-changing negligence inevitably takes place amidst the quest for more profits?

The problems of the PCF have been building for decades, however. Corporate control of the advisory board is only making problems worse. Hospital and industry representatives are quick to provide "solutions" absent a real problem and to vilify everyday New Mexicans injured and killed by their hunger for more profits.

I urge our legislators to think very carefully before committing more taxpayer dollars to the PCF and ask the tough question — who is truly being served?

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