

SUMMARY – June 7 regional network meeting

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, July 12, 6:30 – 8:00 pm, Mass. Nurses' Conference Room, second floor, room 234/236, Potpourri Plaza, 241 King St, Northampton (across from Stop & Shop).

More than 20 people attended the second regional meeting of Medicare for All on Wednesday, June 7. Several folks were representing “hub” groups working on Single Payer in western Mass, and others were interested individuals.

REPORTS AND UPDATES:

- Single Payer has been in the news these past few months – thanks to the activity of all the groups in our regional network. There have been at least five different news stories in the regional press over the past few months that featured or included significant mention of Single Payer activity. Let's keep up the good work and keep this issue in the public eye!
- Save the date: Jewish Community of Amherst group will be hosting a **forum on November 5 with Senator Jamie Eldridge** – lead sponsor of S619, our Medicare for All bill. Also on the panel: Jackie Wolf, Gerald Friedman, and possibly one more.
- Pathways to Justice health care group in Northampton now has a sponsor for their resolution for City Council to support Medicare for All in Mass. They are also reaching out to other groups, such as the League of Women Voters in Northampton, to get involved.
- The Worthington group recently hosted a well-received forum about health care (May 31) including the director of the Hilltown Community Health Center, a representative from the Governor's office, Jackie Wolf, and Rep. Steven Kulik - in absentia.
- Several folks attended the Democratic Party platform convention and reported a lot of interest in Single Payer among those in attendance. All three gubernatorial candidates mentioned SP in their speeches, but apparently didn't put much emphasis on it. Single Payer is in the platform: our job now is to see that lawmakers actually give it the attention it deserves!
- The Pioneer Valley Women's March (PVPM) organized a “die-in” on June 4 in Northampton as part of a national day of action. The purpose was to demonstrate the deadly impact of proposed AHCA legislation. The demo also supported Medicare for All by having a speaker (me) from our network and including our information on the handouts.
- PVWM is also coordinating a project to collect testimony from people who have benefitted from the Affordable Care Act for Sen. Warren to use in speaking against its repeal. **Contact Lindsay Sabadosa** at lsabadosa@gmail.com.
- Save another date: Carolyn Oppenheim, a member of Northampton Committee to Stop the Wars, is organizing a showing of “Fix It” – a movie about our insane health insurance system and the Single Payer alternative: **June 28, 6:30 p.m. at Forbes Library.** Reps

from our network will be there to lead a discussion afterward and invite people to join the movement for health care as a human right.

- Diane Scherrer of the Mass Nurses Association (MNA) updated us on negotiations between the nurses and Baystate in Franklin County. Exhausting and dangerous overtime scheduling is a key issue; Baystate is stonewalling. MNA will decide soon if they are forced to strike. The MNA is a strong advocate for Medicare for All and health care justice in the Commonwealth, and allows us to use their conference space for our meetings. **UPDATE:** The MNA nurses at Baystate Franklin Medical Center have given notice of a one-day strike on June 26, 2017.
- A new chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America is forming in the Pioneer Valley. They are based in Holyoke, and will have Medicare for All as a main focus. Welcome!

LEGISLATION: Mass. Medicare for All bills continue to sit in the Health Care Financing (HCF) Committee, awaiting a public hearing. According to the rules for Joint Committees, the hearing should be held by the end of June. Our statehouse contacts, however, believe the hearing is more likely to be held in September. Then a final report from the HCF committee must be completed by March 28, 2018 – determining whether the bills can continue on for debate by the Senate and House, or die in committee, as they have in the past. **UPDATE: The public hearing has been scheduled for Tues. June 20 at 11 am at the statehouse in Boston.**

At the national level, Sen. Bernie Sanders is expected to submit a Single Payer bill to the Senate this summer. John Conyer's House Bill (HR 676) now has 110 co-sponsors – the most that have ever signed on to a national Single Payer bill.

TABLING: Several people signed up to coordinate tabling about Medicare for All at farmers markets in different towns this summer. Many thanks to Jane Allen for offering to coordinate the coordinators! **If you want to help with tabling and didn't sign up already, please contact Jane for more information: nellajpt11@gmail.com.** There will be an orientation session for new tablers on **Sunday, June 18** to sort out logistics and to practice talking about Medicare for All with the public. Becky Mitchell volunteered to get some handouts translated into Spanish – thank you, Becky!

NAME: We had a good discussion about choosing a name, debating the pros and cons of different words and phrases. Final consensus: **“WESTERN MASS MEDICARE FOR ALL.”**

FACEBOOK: Michael Barboza-McLean and Judi Wisch volunteered to help launch a Facebook page for our newly-named group. They will be administering the page along with Jon and me. It's live already as I write these notes – **find us at WMM4A – or Western Mass Medicare for All.** “Like” the page and invite your friends to like it, too. Thank you, Michael and Judi!