

Summary of WMM4A meeting – July 12, 2017
Written by Deborah Levenson

NOTE: The next meeting will be Wed. August 9 at 6:30 p.m. If you are interested in getting involved with WMM4A activities or would like more information about anything in this report, contact us at medicare4all@wmjwj.org

About 30 people attended the July 12 meeting, individuals and representatives of “hubs” (active single payer groups) from Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden counties.

Local updates

“Pathways to Justice” has merged with **Northampton Indivisible**. The health task force is proceeding with a resolution for City Council to support Medicare for All bills in Mass. Timeline is to try to get the resolution passed by August 17. **ACTION:** *Save the date.*

The **Jewish Community of Amherst** task force is planning a forum about Medicare for All on Sunday, Nov. 5, 2:00-4:30 pm at the JCA. Confirmed panelists are Sen. Jamie Eldridge (lead sponsor on senate Medicare for All bill), Jerry Friedman, Jackie Wolf, and Jon Weissman. **ACTION:** *Save the date and let others know.*

In Easthampton, **Pioneer Valley Action** is forming a new hub and considering different actions they may take. Welcome to WMM4A!

MNA nurses at Baystate Franklin Medical Center are back at work after a one-day strike and 3-day lockout. They appreciate support from WMM4A folks. Negotiations will begin again next week for safe staffing and fair health benefits. The union has filed a complaint regarding unfair labor practices at Franklin Medical that took place following the strike. MNA is a strong supporter of Medicare for All and is represented in WMM4A; we meet in their conference room. **ACTION:** *Call Mark Kerouac, CEO of Baystate, and ask him to negotiate in good faith. His phone number: 413.794.5890.*

Pioneer Valley Women’s March is planning a march and rally on Sat. July 29 – “Our Lives on the Line” - to defend the ACA and reproductive rights, and promote Medicare for All. March begins at Child’s Park at 1:00 pm, proceeding down King St. to a rally at Pulaski Park at around 2:00 pm. Note: this event takes place the day before the 52nd anniversary of the passage of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. **ACTION:** *Save the date and pass the word!*

Plans to organize a **western Mass chapter of PNHP** – Physicians for a National Health Program – are underway. PNHP includes medical students and other health professionals, along with MDs. **ACTION:** *If you’d like to get involved, contact Cathie Kory: cathiejk@gmail.com*

Report-back: Tabling at Northampton Farmer's Market launched on Saturday. Amherst tabling continues; Springfield Forest Park and other sites are getting underway. **ACTION:** *Let us know if you would like to help with tabling. Contact Jane Allen: nellajpt11@gmail.com*

Report-back: Showing of Fix It at Forbes Library on June 28, sponsored by the Northampton Committee Against the Wars, was a big success. About 50 people crowded the room, most staying for the discussion afterward with Jon and Deborah. **ACTION:** *Consider organizing a showing of Fix It at your own local library or elsewhere. We'll be glad to help.*

State and National updates:

Report-back: Public Hearing in Boston June 20 on Medicare for All bills – Good turnout, crowded chamber, most of the Health Care Financing (HCF) Committee showed up and listened for quite a while. About 25 people testified in favor of the Medicare for All and “benchmark” bills. One person testified against the bills – an official from Mass. Assn of Health Plans, which represents about 15 insurance companies in the state. A report out from HCF is due no later than March 28, 2018. **ACTION:** *Contact the chairs – Rep. Jeffrey Sanchez and Sen. James Welch - and other members of the HCF Committee. Ask them to report the bills out “favorably” so that they can be debated by the full legislature, rather than dying in committee. Contact info at <https://malegislature.gov/Committees/Detail/J24> Welch, Lesser, and Velis are western Mass legislators on the HCF committee.*

National Legislation: House bill H676 now has 114 co-sponsors. Among Massachusetts' nine representatives, only McGovern, Clark, and Capuano have signed on so far. Bernie Sanders is expected to submit a similar bill in the Senate this summer, perhaps around July 30, which is the 52nd anniversary of the passage of Medicare and Medicaid.

Discussion – “Where do we go from here?”

- Suggestion to conduct the cost comparisons described in the “benchmark” bill without having to pass the bill itself. Is this something that Jerry Freidman could do with graduate student help?
- Focus on getting the bills out of committee. This is an issue of democratic process. Shine a light on that process – don't let the bills die again hidden away from public scrutiny.
- Media campaign - Letters to the editor, social media, etc. Try for multiple letters around the July 30 Medicare/Medicaid anniversary date.
- Suggestion to draft a letter to the media with multiple signers representing organizations that support Medicare for All.

- Develop and make available “talking points” for letters, lobbying, etc. Include data that show popular support – such as towns that have passed resolutions, results of ballot initiatives from 2010, Democratic party platform plank, etc. Is there any state polling data available – perhaps as a subset of a national poll?
- Interest in passing more town resolutions. FCCPR helped pass several such resolutions this spring in Franklin County; Indivisible Northampton (previously Pathways to Justice) is working on a city resolution this summer.
- Suggestion to calculate municipal savings in other towns – especially the towns of HCF committee members – to use for lobbying and publicity. In western Mass, focus towns would be Westfield (Velis); East Longmeadow (Lesser); and Springfield (Welch).
- Several western Mass folks will meet with Sen. Eldridge on Friday, July 21 to discuss strategy for passing Medicare for All legislation. Eldridge is the main sponsor of S619. Jon and I will bring comments from this discussion to that meeting and report back afterwards.
- Note: After the meeting, informal breakouts met briefly to discuss town resolutions and letters to the editor.

WMM4A Facebook page

Judi reminded everyone who is on FB to “like” the new WMM4A page, and to like and share posts. She then walked us through the process for inviting our FB “friends” to like it, too. The more “likes” “shares” and other activity the page gets, the more people we will reach with our message about Medicare for All. Inviting your FB friends to like the page is one of the best ways to expand its reach. We had about 112 people following the page before the meeting. We now have 182!

Mission Statement

After discussion, WMM4A adopted the following mission statement by consensus:

“Western Mass. Medicare for All believes healthcare is a human right. We work with organizations across Massachusetts to pass Medicare for All legislation for the state and the nation.”

We agreed that the statement can be modified in the future as our work evolves.

Next Meeting

WMM4A will meet on the second Wednesday of each month. The next meeting will be Wed. August 9 at 6:30 p.m.