

## Summary of 8-9-17 WMM4A Meeting

**The next meeting of WMM4A will be Wed. Sept. 13 at 6:30 p.m.**

A lively group of about 30 people attended the August monthly meeting, including individuals and representatives of “hubs” – groups actively supporting Medicare for All across the region.

### **LOCAL UPDATES:**

**Thursday, August 17<sup>th</sup>** -- **Northampton City Council** will hear testimony and take a first vote on a resolution in support of the Medicare for All bill (S619) pending in Mass. The resolution was written and advanced by the **Pathways to Economic Justice group of Indivisible Northampton**. Council sponsors are Alisa Klein, Bill Dwight, and Margaret Cleary. **ACTION:** Please attend on the 17<sup>th</sup> to support this effort. Meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. in Council chambers behind City Hall in N'ton. If you are a N'ton resident and want to testify, arrive a few minutes early to sign up.

**League of Women Voters Amherst** gave a program on Medicare for All to the Democratic town committee of Lunenburg (north central Mass). Originally planned for half an hour, the conversation went on for two hours! LWVA will also present soon to the Shrewsbury Rotary Club, and to the Springfield LWV chapter later in September. LWVA continues to table in Amherst most Saturdays, with a petition showing support for Medicare for All. **ACTION:** If you would like to connect with LWVA, contact Jackie Wolf: [lwwahealthcare@yahoo.com](mailto:lwwahealthcare@yahoo.com)

**WMM4A tabling** continues in several towns this summer – currently at two sites in Northampton, Forest Park, Mason Square, and South Hadley. **ACTION:** If you can help with tabling or “clip-boarding” at these sites, or if you would like to establish a tabling site in another location, please contact Jane Allen: [nellajpt11@gmail.com](mailto:nellajpt11@gmail.com)

The Pioneer Valley Action group is now officially called the “**PVA hub for Easthampton and vicinity.**” They are beginning to organize in Easthampton, scouting good locations for tabling. They plan to hold a public event in a few months, with speakers and a showing of the film “Fix It.” **ACTION:** If you live in the Easthampton vicinity and want to get involved, contact Sara Weinberger: [spw128@comcast.net](mailto:spw128@comcast.net)

A new hub is forming in the Forest Park section of Springfield, open to all Springfield folks. **ACTION:** If you would like to connect with this group of Medicare for All advocates, please contact Tim Oppenheimer: [timoppenheimer@gmail.com](mailto:timoppenheimer@gmail.com)

Wayne Standley announced an organizing effort to coordinate **support for labor actions by nurses** across the state. This effort, in collaboration with Jobs with Justice, builds on community support for the recent strikes in Franklin County and Tufts. **ACTION:** Contact Wayne: [w.standley@comcast.net](mailto:w.standley@comcast.net)

Cathie Kory is coordinating the effort to re-establish a **Pioneer Valley chapter of Physicians for a National Health Plan**. She expects the kick-off meeting to happen some time in September (we'll keep you posted). The PV chapter will advocate for Medicare for All in Mass. as well as nationally. **ACTION:** If you are an interested medical professional or medical student, contact Cathie: [cathiejkg@gmail.com](mailto:cathiejkg@gmail.com)

**The Worthington group** is planning to meet soon with Rep. Kulik to establish a dialogue with him about health care policy and legislation.

### **STATE UPDATES:**

**Report on the Eldridge meeting:** Several western Mass folks, including me (Deborah), Jon, and Jackie, met recently with Sen. Jamie Eldridge, the main sponsor of S619, the bill establishing Medicare for All in Mass. Ideas from WMM4A were very much a part of the conversation. Three main “take-aways” from that meeting:

1. The Health Care Financing (HCF) committee is unlikely to report out favorably on the Medicare for All bills this session. We should, therefore, be **developing a longer-term strategy** with an eye toward passing the legislation by 2020. Most critically, we will need to build a strong grassroots movement if we expect to succeed. We have already begun reaching out to organizers from different groups across the state to draft a longer-term statewide strategy.
2. Efforts to pass the bills this session will continue at the same time. **Rep. Peter Kocot** was recently appointed as co-chair of the HCF committee, and he is a co-sponsor of the Med for All bills. We are organizing a delegation to meet with him soon.

Sen. Eldridge will draft a **“Dear Colleagues” letter** to the co-chairs of the HCF committee. The letter will encourage them to report out favorably on the Medicare for All bills during this session. Other co-sponsors will be asked to sign that letter as well. Both co-chairs are from western Mass (Kocot and Sen. Jim Welch) and a number of western Mass legislators are co-sponsors. So we will be discussing how best to support this effort once the letter is drafted.

3. Sen. Eldridge will contact CHIA – an “independent state agency,” **Center for Health Information and Analysis** – about the possibility of conducting a “benchmark” study even if the legislation does not pass this year. The study would compare current health spending with spending under a single payer system.

### **NATIONAL UPDATES:**

Bernie Sanders has said that he will submit a single-payer bill to the Senate in September. He has also begun organizing support for single payer through a mass email with a request for sign-

ups. As single payer becomes a more prominent subject nationally, we are likely to hear more opposition, too, and we'll need to keep educating ourselves so that we can respond effectively.

We are likely to hear **two kinds of opposition**: direct opposition from those who simply don't want single payer – like the insurance companies; and “indirect” opposition from politicians and others who say they want single payer but not now, or not for everyone. Some say “we must fix the ACA before we talk about Single Payer.” Others propose a “public option” that people can purchase alongside private plans. Or a gradual reduction in the age when people can “buy into” Medicare. Here are two good sources for information and articles about the national debate: **PNHP.org** (Physicians for a National Health Plan) and on **Facebook, “Health Over Profits for Everyone” (HOPE)**.

#### **RUM COALITION:**

Jon Weissman shared information about **Raise up Massachusetts (RUM)**, the statewide coalition that has spearheaded successful campaigns for paid sick leave and a higher minimum wage. RUM is currently organizing for two ballot initiatives - \$15 minimum wage, paid family and medical leave – and a constitutional amendment for a “millionaire’s tax” to raise money for public education and infrastructure.

Jon suggested that it might be possible for RUM to take up single payer as one of their campaigns in the future, and this would be another reason to support their work. Discussion indicated that while WMM4A folks generally support the RUM campaigns as individuals, we do not want ongoing communications about RUM through the WMM4A listserv or FB page, as people sign up with the understanding that they will be receiving Medicare for All info.

People asked that we provide information once about how to connect with RUM, so here it is: website at **raiseupma.org** and on **Facebook at Raise Up Massachusetts**. There are several local trainings over the next few weeks about how to collect signatures for the ballot initiatives. Find details by signing up with RUM or checking their FB page.

#### **Next Meeting:**

Wednesday, September 13, 6:30 P.M.

Summary written by Deborah Levenson.