

1st Franklin District

Single-Payer Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Kate Albright-Hanna

Question #1: Do you support a Single Payer healthcare system for Massachusetts?

Yes.

Question #2: If yes, why? If no, how would you propose making health care truly affordable for everyone in your district and the Commonwealth while also bringing down the rising cost of healthcare?

Our current system has a 30% overhead cost for administration. Medicare has 4%. If we implement an improved Medicare for All system, we can use that extra 26% to provide actual health care, as opposed to managing the insanity of the private insurance bureaucracy. Right now many people who have insurance can't afford to use it, while still having to pay many of the hidden costs of the current system (like taxes that go towards health care for public employees). A Medicare For All system will be entirely more transparent and simple -- and most people will pay a lot less for their health care. Best of all, they'll have the freedom to change jobs and choose their relationship status without worrying about how those decisions will impact their health care.

Question #3: Please write one sentence that best expresses your current position on establishing a Single Payer system in Massachusetts.

Adopting a single payer system in Massachusetts is my number one priority because it's the single most effective way to make everyone healthier, more financially secure, and free to pursue careers and relationships that had previously been held hostage by the for-profit insurance industry.

Question #4: According to all research studies and the experience of other countries, a Single Payer system brings costs down while providing affordable health care for everyone. What is your biggest question or concern about establishing Single Payer in Massachusetts?

My biggest concern is how a hostile federal government could try to sabotage a state effort to establish single payer.

Question #5: If elected, what would you do inside the Statehouse to advance Single Payer legislation and how soon would you begin? Who would you work with in your district?

As soon as I win the Democratic primary, I will reach out to other members of the Western Massachusetts delegation to plan for a single payer caucus inside the House – as well as to progressive senators who can game out a strategy to get it over the finish line. We also clearly need more grassroots pressure from the eastern part of the state, and I would work with our already-engaged western Mass-based communities to make that happen.

Question #6: What do you see as the biggest obstacle(s) to passing legislation for Single Payer in the Commonwealth?

Number one is the for-profit private insurance industry, which will throw everything at a fight that threatens its existence. We'll also need to make sure that people employed in that industry can make a smooth transition into similar-paying jobs that support a healthy local economy.

Question #7: If elected, will you help initiate and actively participate in a legislative caucus to advance Single Payer legislation?

Yes, I'll start to organize it as soon as I win the Democratic Party nomination in September.

Candidate: Natalie Blais

Question #1: Do you support a Single Payer healthcare system for Massachusetts?

Yes.

Question #2: If yes, why? If no, how would you propose making health care truly affordable for everyone in your district and the Commonwealth while also bringing down the rising cost of healthcare?

Growing up on in northeastern Vermont, my primary care physician was located just over the Canadian border. If Dr. Bouchard's porch light was on, he was available to see patients. I remember he had a sign on the wall that read, "No one must pay. If you are short of money just say, 'Thanks Doc'."

Canada provides universal single payer healthcare for all. The United States should be doing the same. We need to ensure that people are not making decisions about their health – about their future – based on concerns about how they will pay for care.

Like Dr. Bouchard, we need to turn the porch light on for every resident of Massachusetts to receive the healthcare they need.

For these reasons, I support publicly administered universal single payer healthcare coverage that is:

UNIVERSAL - All Massachusetts residents should be covered regardless of medical history, age, income, or employment. - All providers would be included in order to eliminate worries about in-network vs. out-of-network expenses.

COMPREHENSIVE - There should be no gaps. - It should include coverage for prescriptions and medical devices. - It would eliminate the need for supplemental insurance.

ACCESSIBLE - Residents of the First Franklin District should not have to travel long distances to get the care that they need. - We must provide better access to healthcare in

rural areas and invest in the public transportation that will get patients to and from their doctor.

FREE AT POINT OF SERVICE - No hidden fees - No co-pays - No deductibles

As your State Representative, I would take the following actions to support universal single payer coverage:

- Support H2987 - An act establishing improved Medicare for All in Massachusetts.
- Support H596 – An Act to Ensure Effective Health Care Cost Control.

Question #3: Please write one sentence that best expresses your current position on establishing a Single Payer system in Massachusetts.

We must implement universal single payer healthcare to ensure that people are not making decisions about their health – about their future – based on concerns about how they will pay for care.

Question #4: According to all research studies and the experience of other countries, a Single Payer system brings costs down while providing affordable health care for everyone. What is your biggest question or concern about establishing Single Payer in Massachusetts?

One of the challenges Vermont faced in implementing universal single payer healthcare was the movement of residents across our state lines. Many residents of Massachusetts work or receive healthcare out of state. How will we address these cross-border issues? Are there regional approaches that could be developed? For example, could a coalition of New England states band together to implement universal single payer coverage?

Question #5: If elected, what would you do inside the Statehouse to advance Single Payer legislation and how soon would you begin? Who would you work with in your district?

In order to advance the needs of the residents of western Massachusetts, I would immediately work with state legislators from the region to form a strong voting bloc that can push progressive reforms around healthcare, climate change, public education and infrastructure (broadband, public transportation, roadways and bridges). In this region, we do a lot of things well. But we do one thing particularly well: We work together in order

to tackle significant challenges. Boston could learn a thing or two from western Massachusetts.

I would work collaboratively with Western Massachusetts Medicare for All, Massachusetts Jobs with Justice, Mass-Care, Physicians for a National Health Program, League of Women Voters, Massachusetts Nurses Association, Massachusetts Teachers Association, the Resistance Center, our local unions and other partners to advance universal single payer healthcare.

Question #6: What do you see as the biggest obstacle(s) to passing legislation for Single Payer in the Commonwealth?

Money in politics. It is clear that the majority of Americans want universal single payer healthcare coverage but our voices are drowned out by corporations who have the ability to fund large-scale campaigns against such initiatives. Their interest is in the bottom line and protecting their shareholders, not in helping those who need it most. We have to get money out of politics. I will be voting yes on Question 2 to so that people govern – not money.

Question #7: If elected, will you help initiate and actively participate in a legislative caucus to advance Single Payer legislation?

Absolutely.

Candidate: Christine Doktor

Question #1: Do you support a Single Payer healthcare system for Massachusetts?

Yes.

Question #2: If yes, why? If no, how would you propose making health care truly affordable for everyone in your district and the Commonwealth while also bringing down the rising cost of healthcare?

I lived in Denmark and France, each of which have a different system of socialized health care. In those countries, I experienced firsthand the benefits of single-payer systems. The most obvious advantage to the single-payer systems I lived with is that they were not cost or profit oriented. They focused on patients and their well-being and not on administrative, professional, hospital, or pharmaceutical costs, expenses, or profits. We, too, should turn to single payer as a health-based system of healthcare.

By all metrics — including a recently released study supported by the Koch brothers — single-payer healthcare has the potential to provide more Americans with higher quality care at lower costs. The costs would be lower for individuals, families, municipalities, and our Commonwealth.

I entered this race because of the financial state of our public schools. My childhood school was closed for financial reasons 35 years ago and my own children's school was closed recently also due to finances. Moving to a single-payer system will benefit all of us and will be particularly beneficial in relieving the health insurance costs burdening our underfunded public school districts.

Question #3: Please write one sentence that best expresses your current position on establishing a Single Payer system in Massachusetts.

Our health and pocketbooks can't afford to wait any longer for Medicare for All!

Question #4: According to all research studies and the experience of other countries, a Single Payer system brings costs down while providing affordable health care for everyone. What is your biggest question or concern about establishing Single Payer in Massachusetts?

My biggest concern about establishing single payer in Massachusetts is the resistance we face from establishment politicians, candidates, and corporations who wish to maintain a hold on our current system.

Question #5: If elected, what would you do inside the Statehouse to advance Single Payer legislation and how soon would you begin? Who would you work with in your district?

Inside the Statehouse, I would begin work to advance single-payer legislation as soon as possible. I would work with a caucus of like-minded elected officials as well as individual and group stakeholders — such as Western Mass Medicare for All — in the district and across the state.

During this campaign, I have completed candidate questionnaires from multiple and diverse organizations — all of which I would call on to work with if in office. Most of them, from Progressive Massachusetts to different union organizations have inquired about healthcare, and often about single payer. It is one of the major issues of our time — as well it should be given that roughly 40% of our Commonwealth's budget is spent on MassHealth. Despite that expenditure, many people in our state struggle with healthcare accessibility, affordability, and their health. Our current system is unsustainable.

Question #6: What do you see as the biggest obstacle(s) to passing legislation for Single Payer in the Commonwealth?

Stagnation on single payer legislation in Beacon Hill is our biggest obstacle. Voters need to stand up for and get out the vote for candidates who support single payer. Once in office, our newly-elected officials will need the continued support of their constituency and will have to work together in a collective caucus. This election presents an enormous opportunity to put single-payer candidates in office. Vote in the primary on September 4th!

Question #7: If elected, will you help initiate and actively participate in a legislative caucus to advance Single Payer legislation?

Yes.

Candidate: Jonathan Edwards

Question #1: Do you support a Single Payer healthcare system for Massachusetts?

Yes.

Question #2: If yes, why? If no, how would you propose making health care truly affordable for everyone in your district and the Commonwealth while also bringing down the rising cost of healthcare?

Health care is a right of all individuals and its delivery should not be subject to a question of affordability. Further, our current system is a budget buster for all individuals and organizations and is an unsustainable model. We need a health care system that provides the best possible service delivery, without financial consequences for individuals, organizations, employers or anyone else.

Question #3: Please write one sentence that best expresses your current position on establishing a Single Payer system in Massachusetts.

We need to change the debate from "if you support single payer" to "how can we implement single payer" if we are to move from a political debate to the critically important public policy debate.

Question #4: According to all research studies and the experience of other countries, a Single Payer system brings costs down while providing affordable health care for everyone. What is your biggest question or concern about establishing Single Payer in Massachusetts?

As referenced above, we need to have an inclusive discussion that determines how single payer should be implemented. One of the questions that deserves considerable dialogue and thought is the unemployment affects that will occur with the final transition.

Question #5: If elected, what would you do inside the Statehouse to advance Single Payer legislation and how soon would you begin? Who would you work with in your district?

As mentioned above, I want to be a catalyst for the discussion of how to advance single payer health care. As a State Representative I will try to be a catalyst for discussion and work with everyone to put differences on the table that can and must be addressed. I will be a voice for consensus around the debate.

Question #6: What do you see as the biggest obstacle(s) to passing legislation for Single Payer in the Commonwealth?

Too few people talk about how, they simply talk about being for or against single payer. We need a serious discussion and until we have one that moves beyond politics, we will not achieve this vision of single payer health care.

Question #7: If elected, will you help initiate and actively participate in a legislative caucus to advance Single Payer legislation?

Yes.

Candidate: Casey Pease

Question #1: Do you support a Single Payer healthcare system for Massachusetts?

Yes.

Question #2: If yes, why? If no, how would you propose making health care truly affordable for everyone in your district and the Commonwealth while also bringing down the rising cost of healthcare?

I support a single payer, Medicare for all system because healthcare should be a right, not a privilege, in the richest world in the country. For too long, private businesses have profited off the backs of sick people in this country. As a staffer on the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign and growing up in rural western Massachusetts, I understand and fully support the need for Medicare for all, and want to include dental, vision, and hearing care, as well. Massachusetts has a chance to be a leader again and a model for the country. Rep. Kulik has done many great things for our district, but he hasn't been a vocal advocate for single payer. I think it's critical that the next State Rep for the 1st Franklin district be a bold advocate for single payer and I look forward to doing so. We can be creative in finding cost-saving and sharing measures by creating a regionalized single payer network with states like Vermont, who have already passed single payer but can't afford it (according to their governor) with their small population, as mentioned in the Daily Hampshire Gazette's article on our Sunderland forum from April 19:

"Casey Pease, a Worthington resident and volunteer firefighter looking to become the youngest member of the Legislature, came with bold ideas to fix lingering issues in the commonwealth, and believes if elected, he can make them happen."

"Pease proposed ideas including regionalized single-payer health care extending beyond just state lines, as well as making broadband a public utility so the internet option can be more affordable for customers. He also focused on fixing school and public transit funding in the state."

Question #3: Please write one sentence that best expresses your current position on establishing a Single Payer system in Massachusetts.

Unlike some opponents in my race, I'm proud to have been and will continue to be a strong, clear advocate for a single payer healthcare system in Massachusetts, and the country.

Question #4: According to all research studies and the experience of other countries, a Single Payer system brings costs down while providing affordable health care for everyone. What is your biggest question or concern about establishing Single Payer in Massachusetts?

With the insurance industry as the largest employer in the state, it's important that insurance company workers won't lose their jobs and can find a space in the single payer employment industry.

Question #5: If elected, what would you do inside the Statehouse to advance Single Payer legislation and how soon would you begin? Who would you work with in your district?

It is one of my top priorities when elected. I will hit the ground running on this issue. I vow to fight the special interests, including the pharmaceutical and insurance companies to enact a clean single-payer healthcare bill. I will defer to the groups like WMM4A and give them a seat at the table, along with select boards and school committees who's number one rising cost is health insurance for public employees.

Question #6: What do you see as the biggest obstacle(s) to passing legislation for Single Payer in the Commonwealth?

I see the House leadership and the crippling hold special interest groups from the pharmaceutical and insurance industries as the biggest hurdles for passing single payer.

Question #7: If elected, will you help initiate and actively participate in a legislative caucus to advance Single Payer legislation?

Absolutely. This issue is critical to curbing costs in our schools, for our small businesses and farms across the state.

Candidate: Francia Wisnewski

Question #1: Do you support a Single Payer healthcare system for Massachusetts?

Yes.

Question #2: If yes, why? If no, how would you propose making health care truly affordable for everyone in your district and the Commonwealth while also bringing down the rising cost of healthcare?

I absolutely support single-payer healthcare. MA has been a leader on healthcare and we need to continue to lead by enacting single-payer, including mental health, vision, and dental care. Private healthcare is not accessible or affordable to many MA residents. We leave too many people behind under the current system.

Question #3: Please write one sentence that best expresses your current position on establishing a Single Payer system in Massachusetts.

We need single-payer healthcare now.

Question #4: According to all research studies and the experience of other countries, a Single Payer system brings costs down while providing affordable health care for everyone. What is your biggest question or concern about establishing Single Payer in Massachusetts?

My biggest concern is that the profit-driven health insurance and healthcare industry has far too much influence over policy decisions on Beacon Hill. That influence must be eliminated so that we make decisions in the best interests of people, not profits.

Question #5: If elected, what would you do inside the Statehouse to advance Single Payer legislation and how soon would you begin? Who would you work with in your district?

I would immediately work with progressive legislators who support single-payer to build a coalition and work to bring other legislators on board. I would also work with citizen advocacy groups in my district and beyond, such as Western Mass Medicare for All and the FCCPR Single Payer Task Force to bring pressure to bear on the Legislature and to increase public education and awareness of the issue.

Question #6: What do you see as the biggest obstacle(s) to passing legislation for Single Payer in the Commonwealth?

Legislators need to be willing to commit to doing what's in the best interests of their constituents, not their donors. I see the insurance and hospital industry and its influence as the biggest obstacle.

Question #7: If elected, will you help initiate and actively participate in a legislative caucus to advance Single Payer legislation?

Absolutely!