

Hampshire-Franklin-Worcester

Single-Payer Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Jo Comerford

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?

My central reason for supporting Single Payer / Improved Universal Medicare for All is that accessible, quality, and affordable health care is a human right.

Additionally, akin to many other people-centered, long-term policy options facing the legislature—such as investment in public education and the environment—Single Payer also makes fiscal sense. Currently, health care costs in the Commonwealth are spiraling upward, comprising upwards of 40% of the state’s annual budget. Health care costs are also a municipal concerns as they are increasingly untenable.

Single Payer is our most viable option to arrest and begin reducing these ballooning costs, while offering quality universal care.

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

Single Payer health care is not only the ethical way forward for the Commonwealth, but it’s the most fiscally strategic way forward.

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?

Winning Improved Medicare For All in Massachusetts or Single Payer *and* expanding and stretching the Commonwealth's revenue stream are among my top two campaign priorities.

And the two are linked.

Right now, costs associated with health care are spiraling upward. What's clear is that they won't get any smaller unless we undertake a massive reform effort.

That means that—unless we get health care costs under control—any additional revenue the Legislature raises will likely be siphoned off to deal with ballooning health care expenditures.

A new study from UMass Professor Gerald Friedman found that Single Payer—while providing universal coverage—also arrests and then reduces a combination of government, business, and personal health care spending by nearly \$22 billion every year, in part by:

****Lowering provider and insurance administration costs, drug prices, and hospital rates.**

****Eliminating the need for employer-related insurance administration costs.**

So what this all means is:

****Single Payer health care would not only provide necessary universal coverage and arrest out of control health care costs, but it would reduce costs over time allowing for greater spending in areas like public education, the environment, our infrastructure, job creation, and more.**

That's what I'd call a win-win.

My biggest concern about work to establish Single Payer is that the Legislature won't take bold or decisive enough action to ensure that any movement toward Single Payer is successful. The promise of Single Payer or Universal Medicare for All is so great, we can't undercut it.

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 begin working for Single Payer immediately. In the State House, I'd align myself with Single Payer allies, sign on to S.619, and I'd work with allies to advance and 'watchdog' the pending study. From there, I'd seek to join and help drive efforts to advance Single Payer in the next session.

In the community, I'd join forces immediately with Western Mass Medicare for All and seek to leverage the power of my office on that group's behalf, helping to further our common goals.

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

Among the greatest obstacles to passing Single Payer are:

****Wide spread public awareness of the efficacy and possibility of a Single Payer model which could help drive voters to hold lawmakers accountable to work in their best interest. This leads me to believe that lawmakers--arm and arm with key community allies--must use the power of their office to educate and galvanize constituents.**

****Political will in the Legislature to take the bold steps necessary. And here, I'm mindful of needing to mitigate the opposing pressure from the insurance and pharmaceutical industries.**

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

Yes! You can count on me to be a staunch advocate.

Candidate: Steve Connor

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 am a strong proponent for single payer healthcare system. A person's access to affordable medical services, prevention education, and mental health treatment is a right not a privilege.

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

I believe if all residents paid into a single-payer system, standards and policies could be developed regarding procedures and reimbursements that allow providers opportunities to stop spending valuable healthcare resources on red tape within the current health insurance industry and improve patient care with longer time for appointments and proper education on healthy living and better choices on 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?

Massachusetts can be a leader on this but we have to be "all in" with the principle of healthcare as a right. Legislation has to be bipartisan and written with care. There is no perfect plan and what works in some countries may not be appropriate for Massachusetts. There continue to be significant disparities in coverage and access to care based on income, racial, and educational variables, as well as rural versus urban/suburban geography. I currently work in the veteran world and have witnessed the manipulation of the VA

Healthcare system as a political football, underfunding programs and placing unrealistic mandates on the system by opponents who are not "all in" for a single payer 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?

I would look at all legislation being introduced and by which Legislator. and find those who are cosponsoring it. I would review such legislation and consult with local hospitals, providers, and community health centers to ensure it meets the unique needs of our district in Western Mass. or look to add to it. I would also look to those legislators who do not support single payer and work hard to make the case for its importance, cost savings, and fairness of access for our most vulnerable citizens. I would also fight to have mental health services be treated on an equal basis with physical healthcare.

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

Obviously, health insurance companies that make large profits for top executives and in some cases shareholders. The current trend nationally of increasing affiliations of smaller hospitals into larger hospital systems for greater profits rather than better services and outcomes. The lobbying that will ensue against any single payer plan will be intense by these entities.

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

Absolutely. My people first campaign means all people, including the 2.8% currently not covered with many of those living on the margins and probably most in need of medical and mental health treatments.

Candidate: Ryan O'Donnell

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?

Yes. Massachusetts' law requiring our residents to have health insurance is very different from ensuring that everyone has access to good healthcare. I could wax poetic about the importance of doing this, but at the end of the day healthcare is just something that a good society should provide its people. To me, a single-payer system is the best way to do that.

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

As a public official, I already have a record of supporting single payer healthcare, having voted as a Northampton City Councilor in favor of a resolution asking Massachusetts to establish 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?

I wonder what the best approach would be politically to achieving it and what policy approach would create the best results. I am interested, for example, in a regional model involving multiple states.

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 will work inside and outside the State House. I will co-sponsor and fight for legislation, and I will use my municipal experience to organize locally across the state to build public support.

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

A major obstacle is to this legislation is the influence of the health insurance industry in Massachusetts. I think we need sweeping campaign finance reform so we can start getting policy results on this and other issues.

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

Yes.