

Summary of WMM4A Meeting, Jan. 9, 2019

Local Updates:

The South Hadley/ Granby Hub is continuing its work on Town Meeting resolutions this spring in both towns.

The new Springfield Hub is initially forming as a “hub-generator” with one group of organizers developing an approach to reach across the larger Springfield area. In total, there are nine state representative districts within that larger area. The first in-person meeting will be with Rep. Tosado, who has cosponsored the M4A bills in the past.

The Pioneer Valley chapter of DSA, which organizes the Holyoke Hub, will be holding a rally in conjunction with the National Nurses United barnstorm in Springfield during the second week of February. (See more about the NNU initiative under “National News.”)

The Northampton Hub met with their Representative, Lindsay Sabadosa, to discuss her views as the new lead sponsor of the M4A bill in the House. She is also among the leadership team for the new M4A Legislative Caucus. The N’ton Hub will continue to meet with Lindsay periodically.

The Health Care Providers for SP group will host a wine and cheese outreach event for health care professionals at a private home in South Deerfield on Jan. 30th.

State News:

The new M4A bills will be filed by the deadline of Jan. 18th. A delegation from Mass-Care met with the lead sponsors recently and they agreed with all of the revisions recommended by Mass-Care. These revisions are relatively minor, mostly just correcting some problems with language in the previous version. Although there is some need for revision of the financing section, it was agreed that those changes would wait for a more comprehensive review and analysis of the costs.

Lobby Day for Medicare for All will be Wed. January 23 at the Statehouse in Boston. Advocates from across the state will rally at the Grand Staircase at 11:00 a.m. and then go in teams to lobby their legislators to cosponsor the new M4A bills, with packets that will include all the necessary information. If you can’t get to Boston on the 23rd, please mark the date anyway and call or email your legislators on that day. Questions and carpooling: info@wmMedicareforall.org.

Cosponsors for the House bill must sign on before February 1st; Senate rules are more lenient and allow for cosponsors to sign on to the Senate version of the bill at any time. Senators and representatives can sign on to the bills in both houses.

National News:

A few different groups are beginning to lobby U.S Rep. Richie Neal to support M4A. A coalition of groups called "CD1" had a demonstration at his office recently. They have a multi-issue agenda, one of which is Single Payer.

National Nurses United is organizing "barnstorming" events across the country the week of Feb. 10th to pressure U.S. representatives to support M4A legislation in the House. In the Springfield area, with the focus on influencing U.S. Rep. Richie Neal, there will be a barnstorm Sunday afternoon, Feb. 10th at American International College and another one, organized by Our Revolution Chicopee, at the Chicopee Public Library in the evening on Feb. 12. These barnstorms are intended to kick-start canvassing efforts to build support for M4A.

Community Events:

WMM4A decided by full consensus to cosponsor the Northampton Women's March on January 19th. The march will begin at noon from Sheldon Field, followed by a rally at City Hall. An Activist Fair will also take place from noon-3:00 p.m. at First Churches' Lyman Hall. Thanks to Sean, Patty, and Jerry who offered to coordinate the table for us at the Activist Fair!

WMM4A also decided to cosponsor the Northampton High School Town Hall with Rep. Sabadosa and Sen. Comerford on Friday, Feb. 15th. Many thanks to Ellen and Nancy T for offering to coordinate our table at that event.

WMM4A Joining Mass-Care

The Steering Committee of WMM4A recommended that WMM4A join the statewide coalition Mass-Care at this time. Jon and Deborah joined the board of Mass-Care several months ago along with several other western Mass activists. Our intention was to help reboot Mass-Care as a more activist organization that could lead the statewide movement for Single Payer through grassroots organizing and coalition-building. It now appears that Mass-Care is moving in this direction, and is in better alignment with the goals of WMM4A. After substantive discussion and many thoughtful questions from the assembly, WMM4A decided by full consensus to join the Mass-Care coalition.

WMM4A Structure

We continued the discussion about a more formal structure for WMM4A, following up on the Steering Committee's proposal last month. The SC recommended that the consensus level be set at 75% - meaning that we would continue to strive for full consensus on decisions, but would accept a decision with 75% of those participating in agreement.

We also asked for feedback about the idea of individual membership. This came up when the SC discussed the need for a “quorum” to make decisions at the general monthly assembly. Some questions raised: What would make someone eligible to be a member? Would membership strengthen the organization or add a barrier to participation? How would individual membership mesh with the structure of hub representation? Do we need some way to prevent a group that is not part of our ongoing work from taking over a monthly meeting decision? How much would the administrative burden be? An informal straw poll after the discussion showed that about half present favored the idea of individual membership; the rest were not in favor, “ambivalent”, or undecided. The SC will take this feedback into consideration as it moves forward with a full proposal for organizational structure.

NEXT MEETING: Wed. Feb. 13th.