

Summary - WMM4A General Assembly – May 8, 2019

This was our first meeting at the new location in Holyoke. A good turnout with several folks from Holyoke, South Hadley, and Springfield in attendance. The new location is more central for our current organizing area as we expand more into Hampden County.

Local Updates:

A big victory in Holyoke on May 7 when the Holyoke City Council voted overwhelmingly in favor of a resolution in support of “An Act Establishing Medicare for All in Massachusetts.” Great organizing by the PV chapter of DSA / Holyoke hub helped bring out a crowd for the rally beforehand. Several Holyoke residents also made strong public comments to the Council. Previous work by the hub, including canvassing for the successful ballot question last year and outreach to their elected officials, set the stage for this victory. Here’s a link to a video of the rally with speeches by Mayor Morse, Reps. Vega and Sabadosa: <https://youtu.be/iHwdePWKLRC> Many thanks to Sean Kinlin for producing this excellent video and captioning!

Another victory was in the making the same night as the GA. **A resolution in favor of the Mass. bill passed at the South Hadley Town Meeting on May 8, with a vote of 66-31.** Again, great organizing by the South Hadley/Granby hub led to this success with such a good margin! They met with town officials, contacted all the Town Meeting members and hosted a Fix It showing for them, wrote several letters to the editor, and made a presentation at the pre-TM meeting with Q&A.

Jon Weissman reported about a group of M4A advocates in the **Pittsfield area interested in forming a WMM4A hub**. He’ll be communicating with them and with an outreach team from FCCPR also working with groups in that area. We discussed the possibility of having Berkshire folks Skype or Zoom in for GA meetings, as the new venue has a screen we can connect to a computer for that.

The Springfield hub will host an educational and outreach event on Friday, 5/31 at 640 Page Blvd. in Springfield. They will be showing and discussing the slideshow about the state bill, “An Act Establishing Medicare for All in Mass.” with Stephanie Strand from the Granby/South Hadley hub. The public and legislative staff for Reps. Tosado, Gonzalez, and Willams have been invited. Contact info@wmMedicareforall.org.

The Amherst hub is working on a Single Payer resolution and have begun meeting with their new Town Councilors about this.

The Hilltown hub organized a successful event recently at the UCC church in Ashfield. Good turnout and discussion. Beth Eisenberg announced that she will be stepping down as leader of that hub. She will, however, stay active with WMM4A as our Training Coordinator while she transitions over the next year to a new home out of state. Beth was recognized for organizing and leading the Hilltown hub since its beginning.

The Northampton hub helped organize outreach about M4A at the Pride Parade on May 4th. Many thanks to Miriam Krell Bourke for leading this effort and others who helped.

Discussion about a recent anti-M4A article by Jay Fleitman in *The Hampshire Gazette* and how individuals might respond or coordinate a response.

State Updates:

There will be an organizing meeting in Boston on Sunday, May 19th to launch a Boston-area network of hubs for M4A. Ben Day, Director of the national organization Healthcare-Now! will convene. Deborah Levenson and Frances Boyes from WMM4A will attend the meeting to share our experiences organizing at the regional and local levels here in western Mass.

Beth Eisenberg proposed that people begin to prepare written testimony in anticipation of a public hearing on the state M4A bill (S683, H1194). There may only be a few days' notice when that hearing is announced any time between now and January, 2020. Please consider writing testimony to submit to the Health Care Financing Committee at that time whether or not you are able to attend the hearing in person. Beth wrote up some guidelines and suggestions which are posted on the WMM4A website: <https://www.wmmedicareforall.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/GUIDELINES-FOR-WRITTEN-TESTIMONY-TO-THE-LEGISLATURE.pdf>

Deborah reported on a recent lobbying effort by the Mass. Biotech Council, which represents 1100 "life sciences companies and organization." Their lobbying overturned language in the House budget that would have limited the prices Masshealth pays for pharmaceuticals. Rep. Mariano, among the top House

leadership, eagerly bowed down to their pressure. The Council will soon be opening a “Mass Bio West” office at Umass Amherst.

National Update:

Discussion about the recent public hearing by the Rules Committee, headed by U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern. Several people felt it was a positive hearing even though there had been concerns beforehand about the lack of nationally-recognized Single Payer advocates. Ady Barkin’s contribution as a health care activist now struggling with ALS was especially noted. Deborah noted that Barkin was added to the list of witnesses only after effective pushback from advocates, another example of how activism is needed to advance the changes we want.

Steering Committee Report:

WMM4A applied for and recently received another grant for \$2500 from the Markham-Nathan Fund for Social Justice. Many thanks to the MN Fund for their support and confidence in our work!

The Steering Committee (SC) is drafting a document called “Guiding Principles” and working with a graphic designer on options for a logo based on the GA discussion several months ago. We will bring these items to the GA as soon as they are ready.

The SC is preparing materials that will give WMM4A advocates a handy reference for **general knowledge / talking points / Q&A about Single Payer health care and how we are organizing to achieve it.** These reference materials will help advocates to feel more confident talking with others about M4A, presenting to groups, canvassing, writing a letter to the editor, etc. We will also be discussing how to make these materials most useful through various kinds of trainings. Deborah gave a summary of WMM4A education efforts that have provided a foundation for the reference materials. Here’s the link to that summary: <https://www.wmmedicareforall.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ED4ACTION-Scope-examples.pdf>

NEXT MEETING: Wed. June 12, 6:30 p.m. Location: Mass. Green High Performance Computing Center, Holyoke.