

SUMMARY WMM4A GENERAL ASSEMBLY – JUNE 12, 2019

LOCAL UPDATES:

Granby / South Hadley hub plans to do tabling and outreach this summer. Outreach in Granby will be in preparation for a Town Meeting resolution in that town next spring. One of their members who is a minister is looking into connections among faith communities. They are considering adding Hadley to the hub as well.

Springfield hub held a successful educational event in June with Stephanie presenting the slide show about Mass. state legislation, followed by a lively discussion.

Easthampton hub is planning a City Resolution in the fall. They have set up a training for hub members in July with Beth, Deborah, and Nancy.

Northampton hub reported a successful event in May at the Senior Center with a showing of Fix It and Q&A.

Amherst hub is actively working on their town resolution, contacting council members in each district and at-large members, and calculating the budget impact of Single Payer.

Holyoke hub will be discussing their next steps after the successful passage of a resolution by City Council in May.

The Health Care Providers Group is planning a series of forums for providers in the fall, with the first probably in Northampton.

Berkshire group - Jon is continuing to work with folks who are interested in forming a hub in the Pittsfield area.

STATE NEWS:

Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse is working with WMM4A and others to launch a new initiative called “Mass. Mayors for Medicare for All.” He is also planning to run against Richie Neal for Congress, and it was reported that Single Payer is likely to be a top issue in his campaign.

Report-back and Discussion: June 11 Public Hearing in Boston on S683, H1194. Western Mass. was well-represented at the hearing in front of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing. WMM4A helped organize several carloads of folks to testify and to support others. More than 100 people overall filled Gardner Auditorium for the hearing.

Fourteen people from Western Mass., most of them WMM4A folks, testified in favor of the M4A bills. Several at the GA shared their experiences about what it was like to testify in front

of the HCF committee as patients, providers, and organizers. Due to the long drive into Boston on a rainy day with traffic, most of our folks arrived after Boston-area people, and were signed up to testify later in the afternoon. It was a long day!

A majority of the HCF Committee attended the 5-hour hearing and asked more questions than at previous sessions, especially of the bills' lead sponsors, Sen. Eldridge and Rep. Sabadosa, who were on the first panel to testify. While saying that they think Single Payer is a good idea, the co-chairs repeatedly said that it's a "complicated" issue, that there are "so many questions." and that Single Payer shouldn't go forward until those questions are answered.

Most of the Committee's questions focused on how Single Payer would work at the state level - how would emergency care be covered when traveling out of state (at prevailing local rates); would folks who live out of state but work in Mass. be covered (yes, if they meet criteria stated in the bill), and so on. Although there were about a dozen bills on the hearing docket, almost all of the testimony addressed the M4A bills and all was favorable. In past sessions, at least one person has testified from the Mass. Assn. of Health Plans (MAHP), representing insurance companies. This time, nobody from MAHP was at the hearing, though their statement against M4A was quoted in most of the media coverage.

The other two bills that got some attention were the Hogan bill, which proposes a commission to study Single Payer and includes reps from MAHP and Blue Cross Blue Shield, two of the most powerful lobbies AGAINST Single Payer. A few M4A speakers testified in opposition to the Hogan bill, too.

Sen. Cyr (from Cape Cod) testified about his "benchmark bill" to compare the cost of Single Payer with current costs. Several folks who attended the hearing felt as though the HCF co-chair, Jen Benson, gave Cyr an especially enthusiastic response compared with her lukewarm and questioning response to folks about the M4A bills.

The next step in the legislative process is for the HCF Committee to discuss these bills and decide whether or not to report them "favorably" out of the Committee. In the past, the bills have never been reported out favorably.

Written testimony can continue to be sent to the HCF Committee until they make their report on the bills (which may not happen until 2020). Here's a link for info about written testimony: <https://www.wmmedicareforall.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Guidelines-Testimony.pdf>

SUMMER PLANS:

WMM4A PARTY - The GA decided to host a party this summer to celebrate and to build community with everybody involved with WMM4A and our supporters. The party will also mark the 54th anniversary of the signing of Medicare/ Medicaid legislation by LBJ in 1965.

Several people volunteered to be on the Party Committee including Ann, Ellen, Deborah, Sean, and Jon. The committee met briefly after the GA. **The party date will be Sunday, July 28th at Community Field in Holyoke, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Save the date!**

Summer Meetings - The GA will **meet next on July 10th** for our regular monthly meeting, but decided to SKIP THE AUGUST MEETING.

Keep in touch!

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