

SUMMARY OF JULY 10, 2019 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

IMPORTANT NOTE: The GA will NOT be meeting in August. The next meeting will be Wednesday, Sept. 11th. Stay tuned for updates.

LOCAL UPDATES:

The Springfield Hub plans to raise Single Payer as an issue in the campaigns for Mayor, City Council and School District positions in Springfield and Chicopee this fall. One of their tactics will be to use a candidate survey similar to the one WMM4A conducted for state legislative candidates in 2018. Both candidates challenging Springfield's Mayor Sarno have supported WMM4A events. Contact Jon: jon@gogtt.net

The Granby/South Hadley Hub tabled recently at a health fair at the technology company E-ink in SH. They are planning outreach over the summer in Granby and Hadley to lay the foundation for TM resolutions in those towns next spring. Contact Stephanie: strandfamily01075sh@gmail.com

A member of the G/SH Hub is helping to organize a forum about M4A for the American Nurses Association on Oct. 1st. The panel will include health economists Jerry Friedman (UMass Amherst) and Jonathan Gruber (MIT), and health policy prof. Nancy Turnbull (Harvard Public Health). Contact Christine: elmsnurse@hotmail.com

The Amherst Hub continues preparing and doing outreach for the hearing on a Town Council resolution in support of M4A on Sept. 23rd. They have finalized the resolution and have a strong lead sponsor on the Council. They plan to hold a rally before the Council meeting on 9/23. The Hub leader has also met with a professor from Hampshire College about holding an M4A event for students in the 5-College Program on Health, Culture, and Science. Contact Anita: asarro05@gmail.com

The Easthampton Hub is also preparing for a City Council resolution in support of M4A, and has connected with a strong lead sponsor. A "first reading" by the Council will be Nov. 6. There will be a training for the Hub on July 23rd to set up the work plan for passing the resolution and to practice and strengthen skills for talking about M4A. **If you live or work in Easthampton and would like to help with this important effort, your support would be much appreciated!** Contact Sara: spw128@comcast.net

The Holyoke Hub will meet on July 20th to discuss their next steps. One idea on the agenda is for different people to take on different areas of responsibility. Chris participated in a panel event hosted the week before by the Pioneer Valley chapter of DSA addressing climate change and health care justice. Contact Chris: craymartin90@gmail.com

STATE NEWS:

The M4A Legislative Caucus - Deborah virtually attended (by “zoom” on computer) the July meeting of the M4A Caucus, chaired by Sen. Eldridge and Rep. Sabadosa. There were about 40 people in attendance including some western Mass. and other legislators; the majority were legislative staff and interns. Ben Day from Healthcare-Now! gave a presentation about Single Payer and responded to a number of questions. Deborah presented the idea of a “People’s Commission” to study various aspects of what SP would look like for Mass. The Caucus meets monthly at the Statehouse and also holds a monthly conference call with reps from Mass-Care and WMM4A.

Mass-Care - Jon reported that Mass-Care is in the process of hiring a half-time staff person to manage the Boston office and to support MC organizing efforts. Here is a link to the announcement: <https://www.idealists.org/en/nonprofit-job/d6e389422e5348289cf07d97bfc31370-medicare-for-all-community-organizer-office-manager-mass-care-boston>

Jon also mentioned that the previous MC staffer had compiled a state map showing the districts with current co-sponsors of the M4A bill. Here’s the link: <https://public.tableau.com/profile/sophia.simeone#!/vizhome/shared/C83HMHQWP>

WMM4A MATTERS:

LOGO - The Steering Committee has been working with a graphic designer in Amherst for several months to develop a logo that meets the criteria set by the GA last year. They presented several designs that they felt best matched the GA’s criteria and were most effective overall. The designs included images based on mountains, a heart / butterfly, and a leaf shape. The GA discussed the designs, including pros and cons, and then **decided on the design based on mountains**. The Steering Committee will check in with the designer about a few tweaks that some thought might improve the design. Once the final version is ready, we will post it to the listserv.

NEW GA MEETING PLAN - Due to a change in the reservation policy at MGHP Computing Center where we’ve been holding the GAs, our meeting times for the fall have been booked by another group. The Steering Committee suggested that we take this opportunity to try a different approach to the GAs for a few months and then evaluated how it goes.

The proposal is to hold the GA at two different locations, with the Hampshire County hubs meeting at the 20 Hampton Court location, and the Hampden County hubs meeting at 640 Page Boulevard. The Granby/South Hadley may also meet with the Hampden County hubs. Then we would meet as a full GA quarterly. The idea is that this might give the hubs a better opportunity to share more information about their work and challenges, and perhaps for more new people to connect with our work in the different locations. In response to some concern about “missing” each other, it was decided to try the separate GAs for just two months – Sept.

and October – and then have a full meeting in November. The current assumption is that both GAs will continue to be held on the second Wednesday of the month (parallel to one another). The Steering Committee will discuss some others questions that came up and report back before the September meeting.

TRAINING SEGMENT:

We dedicated the last portion of the GA this month to training. Many folks have indicated an interest in learning more about how to respond to questions about Single Payer, so we chose a question everyone felt was important and timely: **Why do we NOT support a “public option”?** This question generated many lively and informative responses. The conveners played “devil’s advocate” to help spur things on: “But why disrupt the whole healthcare system when you can just add M4A as another choice?” We all learned a lot and there was general agreement that this format is a useful one for exploring other FAQs. Here are some of the responses folks came up with:

- A public option still leaves the main problems in place -- a complicated, fragmented, profit-oriented system with huge overhead.
- It adds yet another element to the overall patchwork system.
- It doesn’t cover everybody.
- How would we pay for “Medicare for Some”? People would still have to pay premiums and out-of-pocket costs.
- What would a public option cost? It wouldn’t achieve the overall simplicity or market clout of Single Payer so it wouldn’t offer the same savings.
- Inequality of coverage and healthcare would continue.
- Expanding Medicare without true Single Payer would actually expand the PRIVATE market for health insurance. Private “Medicare Advantage” plans now cover about one-third of Medicare-eligible folks, and that market segment is expanding quickly.

NEXT MEETING: WED. SEPT. 11TH. STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFO ABOUT LOCATION.