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SENIOR ACTION LEADER A Voice for Seniors and Their Families

Published by the Massachusetts Senior Action Council www.MassSeniorAction.org

Fall 2018

70,000 Seniors Fall Off Healthcare Cliff Healthcare reform dies in Conference Committee

Legislators on Beacon Hill who had set their sights on stabilizing community hospitals could not reach an agreement on how to do that before the end of July as the legislative session ended, handing a win to insurance groups in Massachusetts who had lobbied against a proposal that would have forced them to pay a one-time assessment of more than \$300 million.

Two different bills passed by Democrats in the House and Senate were ultimately too far apart for any agreement to be reached. As a result, the 70,000 seniors who become ineligible for some healthcare benefits when they turn 65 continue to face the effects of the healthcare cost cliff.

House Majority Leader Ronald Mariano told the News Service, "We were just too far apart philosophically to come to a resolution that fit our agenda."

The Quincy Democrat said the House was focused on trying to find a way to financially stabilize community hospitals in the short term with assessments on insurers and large hospitals, while Mariano said the Senate "wanted a market-driven approach. This isn't going away. There's some frustration. We'll have to come back to it in January."

While the Senate passed its version of health care legislation last November, the House did



Members fill the Grand Staircase at the State House fighting for equity while chanting, "Build Those Steps!!"

not act until late June. In both the House and the Senate, Mass. Senior Action Council's "Bridge The Senior Healthcare Gap" was included in the larger healthcare reform legislation. If passed as a single bill instead of being included in the healthcare overhaul legislation, 70,000 seniors would have been eligible for the Medicare Saving Program, saving each person on average \$150.00 to \$250.00 per month.

"To say we are disappointed is an understatement. Seniors across the Commonwealth have made it clear, we need relief now! Seniors with limited incomes are spending 20-30 percent of their income on

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STATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Edna Pruce, President

Kathy Paul, 1st Vice President

Linda Moore, 2nd Vice President

Rosa Bentley, Treasurer

John Ratliff, Secretary

Karen Lynch, Membership Coordinator

Chapter Meeting Information:

BOSTON CHAPTER

When: 2nd Thursday of the month at 12:30pm

Location: Charles St. AME Church

551 Warren St., Dorchester

CAMBRIDGE/ SOMERVILLE CHAPTER

When: 3rd Friday of the month at 12:30 pm

Location: Cambridge Senior Center

806 Mass Ave., Cambridge

NORTH SHORE CHAPTER

When: 3rd Wednesday of the month at 10:30am

Location: 10 Church St., Lynn

METRO NORTH CHAPTER

When: 4th Wednesday of the month at 1:30 pm

Location: Malden Senior Community Center

7 Washington St. Malden

GREATER SPRINGFIELD CHAPTER

When: 4th Wednesday of the month at 1:00 pm

Location: Springfield Hobby Club

309 Chestnut St. Springfield

BRISTOL COUNTY CHAPTER

When: 4th Thursday of the month at 1:00 pm

Location: Greenwood Terrace, Westport Housing Authority

666 State Rd., Westport

NORTH SEACOAST AFFILIATE

Meetings paused. Members will receive monthly updates.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Enclosed are membership dues for:

\$10 1-year individual \$15 1-year couple \$50 individual lifetime \$75 couple lifetime

NAME(s): _____

ADDRESS: _____ APT #: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

Make checks payable to: MSAC

Mail to: Mass Senior Action, 108 Myrtle St., Suite 112, Quincy, MA 02171

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT *by Edna Pruce*

Hello to all the MSAC Social Justice Warriors and our supporters.

Since the last edition of our newsletter, “The Senior Action Leader (SAL)”, members have been working to build the senior voice across the Commonwealth. From Lynn to Springfield, down in Bristol County to Cambridge senior power is building and the group with the blue shirts are taking charge!

Most MSAC members have heard me say the MSAC Bridge the Senior Healthcare Gap Campaign was the trigger that began my participation in Mass Senior Action. Four years ago, we began this journey to lower the cost of healthcare for people 65 and over. In the last edition of this newsletter, we reported the Senate adopted and passed our plan to expand the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) to cover the cost of Medicare premiums, co-pays, and deductibles. Since then, we have been working with our State Representatives to do the same on the House side.

On April 20th, I presented at the “Senior Civic Academy” with MSAC staff organizer, Brandon Gibbs. These are educational workshops offered to Boston area seniors. Our presentation focused on public speaking and lobbying. I shared our tools we use to create change and was able to recruit new MSAC members.

Then on April 27th, the MSAC Boston chapter hosted a

healthcare forum at the “Anna Mae Cole Center” in Jamaica Plain. Members shared their story of high healthcare costs resulting in new seniors joining our fight to bridge the healthcare gap.

On May 9, MSAC members from across the state met at the state house to present to legislators and their aides the importance of passing our healthcare legislation. 40 members dropped off “life saving devices” at both the House Speaker and Governor’s office chanting, “SOS, Save our Seniors!”

On June 12, MSAC joined other elderly advocates at the State House for a massive rally. MSAC bussed folks from all over our chapter areas, filling both the Grand Staircase and Nurses Hall. This event spotlighted the needs of the community, from homecare funding to our healthcare legislation. Members joined allies to shed light on the fact Massachusetts ranks 49th for elder economic security. The only state where seniors have it harder is Mississippi and even they expanded MSP for their seniors!

On June 19, we again visited state representatives office leaving literature about the Medicare Savings Program and our plan to lower the cost of senior healthcare.

On July 17, we met at the State House again filling the Grand



Staircase with blue shirts and sang a rally song adapted by a Metro North member to reflect the issues we fight for. Our voices carried throughout the state house. After raising our voice together, we divided into teams to visit the conference committee members and State House Leadership.

Each time we met with legislators, members shared their stories of high out of pocket healthcare cost. I am so proud to stand with these brave activists. It reminds me of standing with activists in Alabama during the bus boycott with Dr. Martin Luther King. We would not take injustice during our working years and we certainly will not take it in our golden years.

All of these actions prove once again, your participation does matter! It is the work of the average individual that has brought all positive change in this world and it is my honor to fight for change with the dedicated, amazing members of the Mass Senior Action Council!

People Power Will Prevail!

MISSION: As a democratic, grassroots, senior-run organization, Mass Senior Action is committed to empowering seniors and others to act collectively to promote the rights and well-being of all people, but particularly vulnerable seniors.

November 6 Election Ballot Questions

Vote Yes on 1, 2, and 3

Ballot Question 1: Yes for Patients

Studies show a yes vote on Question 1 will dramatically improve patient safety in Massachusetts hospitals by setting a safe maximum limit on the number of patients assigned to a nurse. This bill apposed by the “for-profit” industry, will base staffing on patient needs rather than hospital profits.

Today, outside of intensive care units, there is no law that specifies how many patients a nurse can safely care for at one time. Numerous studies – some noted in box below – show a direct link between excessive patient assignments for nurses and the negative patient outcomes, including medication errors, increased risk for infections, bed sores, and longer hospital stays.

Science Supports Limits:

For every patient added to a nurse’s workload, the likelihood of a patient surviving cardiac arrest decreases by 5% per patient. [Medical Care, January 2016]

For children recovering from basic surgeries, each additional patient assigned to a nurse increased the risk of readmission by a shocking 48%. [BMJ Quality & Safety, May 2013.]

There is a 20% higher risk that a patient will die within 30 days of having general surgery at hospitals that don’t have patient limits. [JAMA Surgery, January 2016]

Ballot Question 2: Yes for Democracy

Most activists are well aware that progress on most of the problems we face, whether unaffordable health care, high prescription drug prices, income inequality, or any other, is blocked by the lobbies of big corporations dominating public policy decisions.

Billionaires and global corporations have greatly increased their control over elected officials as the result of a series of U.S. Supreme Court decisions, such as Citizen’s United v. FEC, that have overturned campaign finance laws, allowing unlimited money to flow into elections and making politicians beholden to their big donors.

The Supreme Court has also given corporations the protection of constitutional rights which has enabled them to go to court and overturn laws meant to protect the public. Now the Supreme Court is even more stacked with pro-corporate justices, and the only way to overturn their decisions is for the people to win a U.S. Constitutional amendment.

Question 2 enables citizens to vote in support of the U.S. Constitutional amendment we need. A winning vote sets up a Citizens’ Commission to study and promote the amendment to Massachusetts elected officials. We the People Massachusetts recommends “Yes on 2!”

Ballot Question 3: Yes for Equality

In 2016, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker signed An Act relative to transgender anti-discrimination (S. 2407), which extended protections against discrimination for gender identity to any place of public accommodation, with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) adopting regulations or policies to enforce its provisions. Some of the places listed as public accommodations include retail stores and MBTA stations. A “yes” vote on this referendum would keep the current law in place while a “no” vote would repeal the law.

Mass Senior Action Council’s leadership feels this is a issue of equality. An injustice to one is an injustice to all.

False fears of safety issues in restroom sometimes lead this discussion. The facts do not support any claims of danger when people are treated fairly. Safety and privacy are important for everyone. That’s why we have laws in place that make it illegal to harm or harass people, or invade their privacy. It’s already illegal to enter a restroom or a locker room to harm someone, period. Anyone who does that can and should be arrested and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Police use these laws to prevent assault, keep people safe, and hold perpetrators accountable. Updating Massachusetts law to protect transgender people from discrimination hasn’t changed that.

Raise Up Mass: Grand Bargain Signed Into Law

The so-called “grand bargain” bill, signed into law by Gov. Charlie Baker, will ultimately raise the state’s minimum wage to \$15 an hour, implement a guaranteed paid family and medical leave program, and establishes a permanent sales tax holiday. It also includes a new payroll tax.

The legislation passed quickly following the court defeat of the millionaire tax ballot question. In exchange for Baker’s signature, the worker and business groups have agreed to drop the three ballot questions addressing the issues in the grand bargain bill. Both sides say the new law is “imperfect,” but were willing to take a few concessions to deliver on their larger goals.

Here is what those policies include:

Minimum wage : The law incrementally raises the current \$11-an-hour minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2023. The increase means that, by that time, Massachusetts will be tied with New York and California (and Washington, D.C.) for having the highest statewide minimum wage in the country. That timeline is a year longer than the one proposed in the minimum wage ballot question, which would have raised the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2022.



Tipped minimum wage: The new law raises the current tipped minimum wage in Massachusetts of \$3.75 an hour by 60-cent increments each year until it reaches \$6.75 in

2023. The raise is slower and less than the amount in the ballot question, which would have raised the tipped minimum wage to \$9 an hour by 2022.

Sunday pay: In something of a compromise to employers, the law gets rid of the requirement that retailers pay an overtime wage to Sunday and holiday workers. However, it maintains that employees cannot be required to work on Sundays or holidays, or be punished for refusing to work on those days.

Paid leave: Beginning in 2021, employees — even self-employed workers — will be allowed to take up to 12 weeks of paid family leave and up to 20 weeks of paid medical leave. Family leave will be available to individuals to bond with a new child in the first 12 months after their birth or adoption. It can also be used to care for a close family member with a “serious health condition” or help a family member in the military who has been called into active duty. Medical leave will be

available to individuals with their own serious health condition.

Payroll tax increase: How is that robust, new paid leave

program paid for? Well, the law also includes a payroll tax increase estimated to bring in \$750 to \$800 million each year. That number may seem large, but in reality it is just a 0.63 percent increase, with the employer and employee roughly splitting the contribution. It is set to take effect July 1, 2019.

Sales tax holiday: Another ballot question that seemed a sure bet to pass this fall was the referendum to lower the state sales tax from 6.25 percent to 5 percent and establish a permanent sales tax holiday weekend in August. Under the legislation signed into law, the business group backing the sales tax holiday got half of what they wanted. While there will be no change to the statewide sales tax, Massachusetts residents will get a two-day weekend each August in which they do not have to pay it.

The wheels of change turn slowly but thanks to people power they do turn.

By Nik DeCosta-Klipa 6-28-18



Cornerstones Under Attack? We Fight Back!

Certain members of congress are making it increasingly difficult, time-consuming, and aggravating to access our earned Social Security benefits, by closing offices nationwide.

The funds that workers contribute to Social Security do not just pay for monthly benefits. Those contributions also fund Social Security's administrative expenses. The local Social Security offices around the country and other personnel and services are designed to ensure that Americans receive their earned benefits in an accurate, timely, and convenient manner. Those personnel and services are paid for with Social Security contributions.

Social Security is extremely efficiently administered. Out of every dollar spent, just seven-tenths of a penny goes to administration. Moreover, Social Security's administrative costs, like its benefits, do not add even a penny to the deficit.

Did You Know?

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>The Federal Government does not fund Social Security</p> | <p>Social Security is funded by American workers</p>  |
| <p>The Federal Government actually owes money to Social Security</p> | |
| <p>The billion dollar anti-Social Security lobby doesn't want you to know where the debt really is.</p> | |

www.TheTruthNow.org

Social Security has a \$2.8 trillion accumulated — and growing — surplus. As for those who say Social Security is unaffordable, the most recent Social Security Board of Trustees report projects a modest shortfall still decades away that could easily be eliminated by requiring the

wealthiest among us to pay their fair share. Congress does not appropriate funds for Social Security's administration. Rather, it limits how much of that huge surplus the Social Security Administration can use to administer the program.

Since 2010, SSA's operating budget has been cut by 11 percent. For 2018, Senate Appropriations Committee has proposed limiting Social Security's administrative budget even more, this time, by another \$492 million.

The increasing squeeze comes as SSA's workload continues to grow. The first members of the baby boom generation turned 65 in 2011, and about 10,000 boomers retire daily.

The ongoing limits Congress is imposing on SSA can be felt in many ways. More than 1 million people are awaiting hearings to determine whether they qualify for Social Security disability benefits. Currently, the wait time for a hearing is more than 600 days. In just the past two years, 18,701 workers have died waiting for a disability decision. That is to say, waiting to find out if they were eligible to receive benefits that they earned with every past paycheck. Benefits that could have saved lives, prevented bankruptcies, and stopped the loss of homes.

At a time when the population is aging, SSA has had to close 64 district offices and more than 500 mobile field offices. Offices still open have had to reduce their hours. SSA's workforce has declined by 6 percent—with five states having lost 15 percent of their SSA employees!

Hours long lines stretching out the door have become a common feature of field offices.



Hold times on SSA's hotline have increased to the point that nearly half of callers hang up in frustration. Importantly, these are services for which the American people have already paid.

None of this is the fault of hardworking SSA employees, who are doing the best they can with limited resources, including fewer staff members to deal with an increasing workload.

Seniors and their caregivers should not have to drive miles from their homes to visit a Social Security office. Bereaved widows and widowers with young children should not have to wait weeks for an appointment to claim the Social Security survivor benefits that their late spouses earned for their families. People with career-ending disabilities after decades of work most certainly should not have to wait two years or more to claim their earned Social Security disability benefits.

Some in Washington like to say that government should be run like a business. Any private business as successful and popular as Social Security would be opening branches, not closing them. If congressional budget hawks simply allow SSA to spend just another one of a percent of Social Security's large and growing surplus, the agency can provide first-class service.

Poor People Rise Up To Take Action!

50 years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. began a campaign to bring attention to the income inequality throughout America. In February, a renewed version of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s campaign to highlight the economic disparity began with national mobilizations, with actions and events planned in 32 states and the nation's capital.

Led by the Revs. William Barber of North Carolina and Liz Theoharis of New York, the campaign officially began in December, 50 years after King started the first Poor People's Campaign.

Activist delivered a letter to politicians calling for a new course in government. "Our faith traditions and state and federal constitutions all testify to the immorality of an economy that leaves out the poor, yet our political discourse consistently ignores the 140 million poor and low-income people in America," the letter states.

Barber, who will be among the group that delivers letters to the office of House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, said the campaign focused on a "season of direct action and civil disobedience" that began on May 13 and continued through June 21, the anniversary of the slayings of three civil rights workers in 1964 in Philadelphia, Mississippi.

The actions, including a poverty tour, will be followed by more work as part of a multiyear campaign to build power "among the poorest and most



powerless communities," he added. When the campaign came to Boston, several MSAC members attended the rally and action.

"It's not immoral to be poor," said Boyd, 65. "It's immoral to make people poor with our actions as a government and as a people."

MSAC 1st Vice President, Kathy Paul, spoke to the crowd, "There are many in Washington who would like to divide us and strip us of our earned rights. By standing here today we are sending a loud message, we will not take it, we will persist and we will resist. We will fight back against attacks on our right to healthcare, cuts to education, cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security so those in Congress without ethics can please their billionaire donor masters. We will be united and not accept any attacks on people based on their religion, attacks based on who you love, attacks based on where you were born, and attacks based on the color of your skin. We will not take it, we will persist and we will resist."

Leslie Boyd of Candler has followed Barber since he began the "Moral Monday" protest movement in North Carolina almost five years ago. Her son, Mike Danforth, was 33 when he died of colon cancer in 2008 because he lacked insurance even though he had a job and couldn't afford the yearly colonoscopies that he needed.

Her hope for the campaign is that it changes what she sees as a national narrative that not only blames the poor for the poverty but uses religion to do so. Too many people believe that "if you were a good person, Jesus would bless you," she said.

U.S. Census figures show that the poverty rate among blacks was 22 percent in 2016, while it was almost 9 percent among whites. But in sheer numbers, almost 17.5 million white people are classified as living in poverty, compared to 8.7 million blacks. The U.S. poverty rate was almost 13 percent in 2016.

"It's not immoral to be poor," said Boyd, 65. "It's immoral to make people poor with our actions as a government and as a people."

Contributed by Martha Waggoner



Annual Celebration Fires Up Members For The Fight Ahead

2018 marked the 37th year of Senior Action. On June 26, nearly 200 MSAC members, friends, family, and allies gathered to celebrate this historic milestone.

MSAC President, Edna Pruce, began the event with a roaring tribute to the social justice gains made by MSAC members. “Looking back on the past year, Mass Senior Action was very busy fighting to protect vital services that seniors and people with disabilities depend on and making sure public officials hear from people in the community who are affected by the decisions they make. Stopping seniors from falling off the healthcare cliff is a major priority for MSAC but it is not the only issue we have been working on.

Greater Springfield fought for and won continued benefits for

area seniors until a new senior center opened. Metro North hosted 4 community workshops to encourage average; caring citizens to run for office and the results were astounding. Malden seen more contested races for city council than any other previous year in memory. The Council now is made up of new candidates who understand what public service truly is.

“These victories are happening all over in MSAC’s chapter areas. We are a force to be taken seriously.” Edna Pruce, MSAC President

These victories are happening all over in MSAC’s chapter areas. We are a force to be taken seriously.”

Each year, chapters choose a member to honor as their

Unsung Hero, a dedicated member who not only builds the senior voice but works to keep the chapter vibrant in their community. The chapters have many members who do tremendous work and this award allows us to show our appreciation for their dedication.

Executive Director Carolyn Villers, thanked the members. “Each of you reaching out for donations, selling raffle tickets, collecting raffle prizes, sharing the great work of MSAC made this year a success. MSAC is a great team and I am so proud to be on your winning team.”

After the unsung hero ceremony, chapters showed off their talent. From poetry, group songs, to the wobble dance, Members joined together uniting for justice and chanting, “We are seniors! We are strong! We are invincible!”

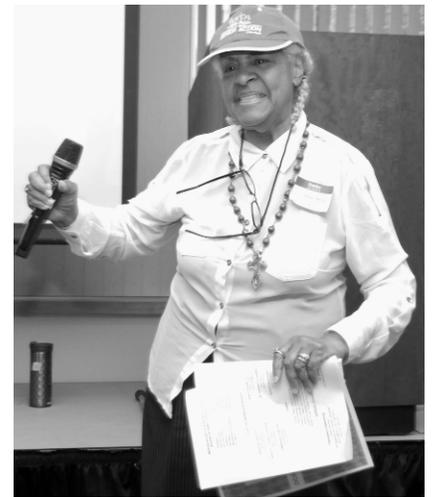


2018 Unsung Heroes: N.Shore: Richard Smith, Boston: Naomi Gray, Metro N: Calvin Walker, Cambridge/Som: Joseph Caparco, Bristol Cty: Connie Mayer, Gr. Springfield: Waters Burroughs

MSAC 37 Years Strong Snapshot! We don't just take it, We Take Charge!!



Above: Shirley Hidden, once again is the top raffle ticket seller.



Above: Special thank you to photographer, Joanne G. Paul-Joassainte, with her mother MSAC 1st V.P-Kathy Paul.



Continued from pg 1

healthcare, choosing between food and prescriptions. Why has Massachusetts left its seniors behind while 19 other states have passed legislation to make healthcare more affordable?" stated MSAC President Edna Pruce when the legislative impasse was announced.

The House passed legislation that would help those who are at 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL) or \$1,517.00 per month. The Senate passed language to expand the Medicare Savings Program

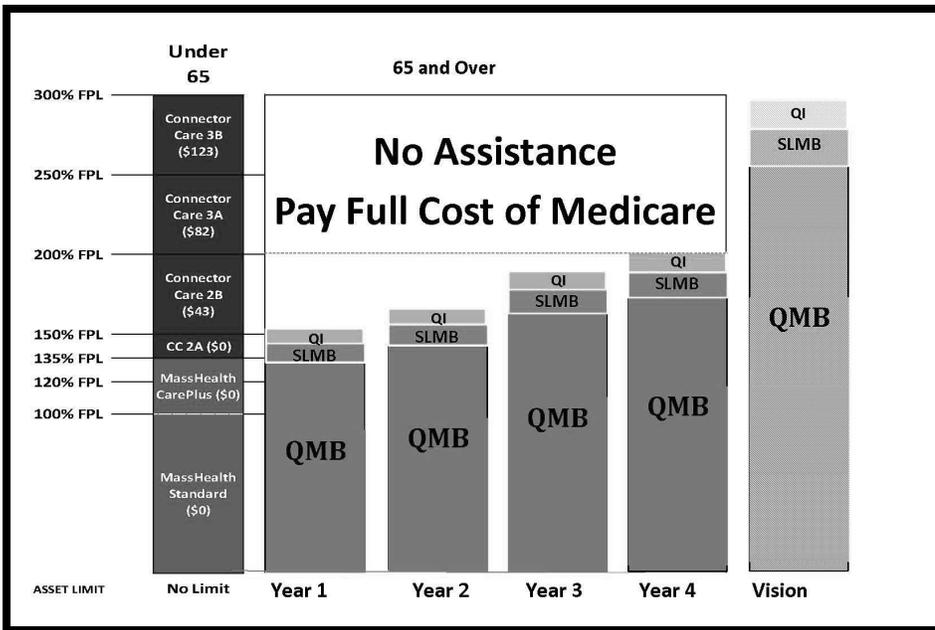
without a set income limit with the thinking it would be hashed out in Conference Committee. MSAC worked with our bill sponsor Senator Jason Lewis to propose a plan that would start at the 150% FPL with steps toward 200% FPL or \$2023.00 within 4 years. Senator Lewis met with members during a break from Conference Committee negotiations, "Your plan is a solid pathway of equity for seniors. It makes sense for both the State and for Massachusetts seniors."

Some on the Senate side immediately pointed the

finger for the reforms demise at the influence of special interests, and the sway they allegedly hold over House members. "It was clear that Insurance Corporations and the Massachusetts Hospital Association were making the calls, and we couldn't accept that," said one senior Senate official.

This is not going to stop MSAC. Members will continue to push for equity and economic security for Massachusetts residents. If you are on Medicare and make less than \$2,000.00 per month, we want to hear from you. Share your story. Join our fight, and we will Bridge The Gap to affordable healthcare and and give seniors falling over the healthcare cliff a lifeline.

Contributed by State House News
This graph is a representation of the health care cliff. The left-most column is the level of assistance available to those under 65 with income up to 300% of the FPL. Each subsequent column shows how the state should increase their income limits for those over 65 in the next four years based on our plan. The column on the right represents our ultimate vision for those over 65.



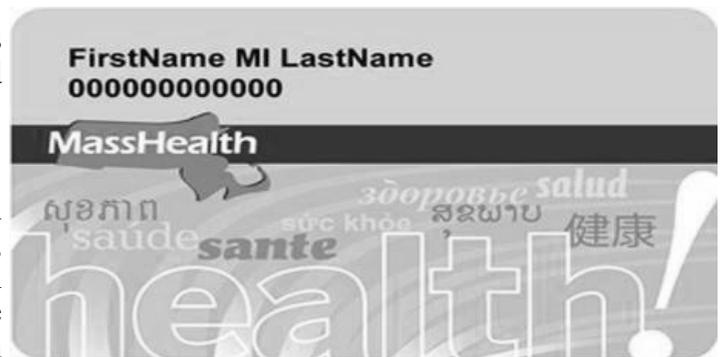
Seeking MassHealth Members to Share Their Stories

Health Care For All is working with the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation and Manatt Health on a project called

The Faces of MassHealth.

We are in the process of identifying MassHealth members who are willing to be interviewed, photographed and profiled for inclusion in a final publication. Our focus is to bring to life real people by exploring both their experiences on MassHealth as well as other defining aspects of their lives in order to paint a full, human picture.

If you would like to share your story, are able to be of assistance in identifying potential participants and/or would like more information about the project,



please contact Natalie Litton, HCFA's Policy & Project Coordinator at nalitton@hcfama.org or (617) 275-2897.

Medicare For All - Tops List For Congressional Campaigns Join Massachusetts Movement

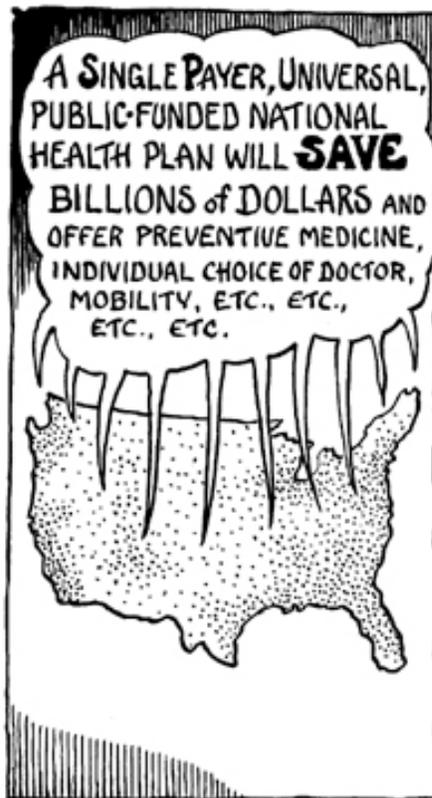
The fight for Medicare for All is heating up in the 2018 Congressional elections.

Medicare for All (M4A) is Single Payer Health Care, that is, publicly financed social insurance for everyone so that health care is a human right. It provides comprehensive benefits and a single standard of care. Health care decisions are made by patients and their caregivers, not by corporate and government bureaucrats. Scarce health care resources are not squandered by profiteers, marketing, and excessive administrative costs, and in fact the cost per person is cut in half. The cost per person is paid by taxes, including increased taxes on the rich; we pay no insurance premiums, deductibles, co-pays, etc.

The national Medicare for All movement wants to improve existing Medicare. In Massachusetts, the statewide movement would create the Massachusetts Health Care Trust.

Western Mass. Medicare for All is a new network working primarily for a state solution because winning in Congress is next to impossible. WMM4A is a network of “single-payer hubs” that work both independently and in coordination (at a monthly meeting in Northampton). We have hubs in Amherst, Easthampton, Franklin County, The Hilltowns, Holyoke, and Northampton. We are organizing Springfield Area Hubs and hope to partner with Mass. Senior Action Council in doing that.

The hubs have focused on public educational events (including



showing “Fix It”, an excellent introduction to the issue which you can watch online at <https://fixithehealthcare.com>) and a non-binding ballot question asking, “Shall the Representative from this District be instructed to vote for legislation to create a single-payer system of universal health care that would provide all Massachusetts residents with comprehensive health care coverage including the freedom to choose doctors and other health care professionals, facilities, and services, and that would eliminate the role of insurance companies in health care by creating a publicly administered insurance trust fund?”

The question will appear in districts represented by Kulik, Scibak, Goldstein-Rose, Kocot (formerly), Vega, and Mark. WMM4A has provided trainings to hubs as they advocate for this ballot question and for



Single Payer in general. Hubs have organized teams to attend the candidate forums in their district and show visibility – wear a button, use the WMM4A banner, hand out literature, ask the candidates questions. Candidates are asked to advocate for M4A when they campaign.

We are reaching out to friends, neighbors, and co-workers about how Single Payer works, why we need it, and how it can be achieved. Join us! Here are ways you can connect with WMM4A:

Subscribe to our email list: send a blank email to healthcareaction-subscribe@lists.wmjwj.org.

Write us at info@wmmedicareforall.org.

contributed by Jon Weissman

AFFORDABLE SENIOR HEALTHCARE CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

Mass Senior Action members have been hard at work fighting for affordable senior healthcare. Right now, while younger people are able to access a range of support for their healthcare costs, seniors are left behind to pay all the costs of Medicare, prescriptions, and necessary supplementary coverage all on their own. Check out the work our members have been doing in the last few months to make sure this issue gets prioritized by our state legislature!

APRIL 2018

Based off a successful event last fall in Springfield, our members hosted forums in Boston, Somerville, and Framingham this April and June to raise the issue in their communities and make sure legislators heard their testimonies and their demand for affordable healthcare.



MAY 2018

On May 9th, members charged to the Statehouse yelling, "Mayday, Mayday!" and urging legislators to throw seniors a lifeline by expanding Medicare Savings Programs to improve access to affordable care for over 70,000 seniors. MSAC members made sure to let them know we'd be back...



JUNE 2018

And on June 12th, our members kept their promise. Over 100 seniors from all across the Commonwealth stormed the Statehouse, emphasizing how urgently this crisis needs to be addressed. Brave members shared their own experiences with unfair healthcare costs and explained how having more affordable healthcare would impact them.



Donate at: www.MassSeniorAction.org

MSAC WILL NOT GIVE UP! HEALTHCARE IS A HUMAN RIGHT!

On that very same June morning, the House of Representatives announced their decision to approve the “Bridge the Gap” proposal! They heard the voices of the blue-shirt team, and they realized the importance of this change.

However prior to the Conference Committee’s impasse on healthcare, the legislature and particularly the Governor only agreed to expand access to Medicare Savings Programs to 150% of the Federal Poverty Line, a fraction of what MSAC had been pushing for (at least 200%). While our members are thrilled for the 20,000 seniors that will benefit from the expansion that Governor Baker is proposing, it’s unacceptable that he is allowing 50,000 Massachusetts seniors to continue to have to make difficult decisions in order to get by, often choosing between food and doctor’s appointments, splitting pills, or leaving prescriptions at the pharmacy one more month.

JULY 2018

While some in the State House are okay with leaving so many seniors behind, MSAC is not. Our members returned this July to remind legislators of the many people getting left behind with this partial expansion. MSAC urged legislators not to stop on the first step of this expansion, but rather to keep building the whole staircase until seniors have fair access to affordable healthcare. Signs read “200 in 2022,” calling for a staircase-style expansion that will reach 200% of the Federal Poverty Line (monthly incomes of about \$2,000) by the year 2022.

Even though, the Conference Committee left 70,000 seniors in the gap, MSAC is going to keep fighting so Mass. seniors are not falling off the health care cliff! And we need your voice, reach out to join us!



Gr. Springfield Fighting For Public Transit Justice

Pioneer Valley Transportation Authority (PVTA) is facing a deficit for its budget which started July 1st, 2018 due to cuts to public transportation in the State Budget. It has resulted in a reduction of services and increased fares. These changes will impact many people in Western Mass, especially seniors who depend on public transportation and paratransit services.

Recently Greater Springfield Chapter members, led by MSAC member Lorraine Crump, learned that we had been successful in advocating for two important issues. These issues were introduced at each PVTA public hearing and outreach regarding its budget cuts and fare change proposal meetings of Winter/Spring 2018:

- The need for benches at PVTA stops and
- The essential demand for the Bay and Westminster Street bus stop to be reinstated.

This victory is a huge step forward. However, there is a recognition of the need to protect public transportation. This will be an ongoing issue. There is still much more to be done to protect affordable public transportation. The senior community is the fastest growing population in Massachusetts and public transportation is a vital concern for many seniors. But for too



many seniors, transportation is a challenge to afford “a quarter doesn’t seem much to anybody but when your living on a fixed income it means a lot. That quarter adds up especially if I want to ride the bus maybe every day or 3 times a week. That’s still coming of my little bit of money” explained Lorraine Crump.

On August 7th, PVTA held another public meeting on additional upcoming service changes. We were advised that PVTA is expected to receive from MassDOT level funding of the statewide regional transit authority’s allocation at the FY15 level of approximately \$82 million (PVTA’s share is \$23.55M). With level funding, PVTA states it is still facing an anticipated operating budget deficit of \$750,000 to \$1 million for the coming fiscal year FY19. It will be unable to maintain service levels. The agenda for that public meeting was to announce new proposed service changes of late

summer/fall 2019. There will be changes to the Senior & ADA Van Changes and the X-92-Mid City Crosstown. The first, no service to adult day health centers and limited service to origin and destinations within PVTA member communities and ADA hours changed to reflect fixed route modifications. The later, inauspicious news was concerning considering that the X-92 was a recently added stop at the new Raymond Jordan Senior Center. This new weekday stop will reduce service from 45 minutes to 60 minutes.

PVTA is the largest Regional Transportation Authority (RTC) in the state with a services area of 43 routes, 600 square miles, 24 cities/towns, 3 terminals and 45,000 rides per day. PVTA’s vision statement shows 68% of its riders are transit dependent, stressing the need for more public transportation advocacy efforts that will promote added transit in its service communities.

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MEET THE MEMBERS

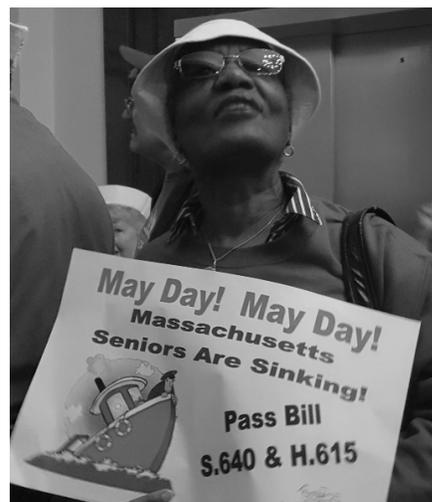
Cambridge/Somerville: Carmelle Madhere

Carmelle Madhere is a proud member of the Cambridge-Somerville chapter of Mass Senior Action, and she has recently taken on new a leadership role as the Membership Coordinator of her chapter.

One reason Carmelle likes to be a member of Mass Senior Action because she cares about healthcare. She had a long career in healthcare, working for 25 years as a nurse companion. In this field, she says, she has

seen a lot of health misery and suffering, especially in elders. She says, "I see how many seniors in my community are suffering, mentally and physically, and so I know how important it is to try to get services that will be good for seniors." She knows firsthand how important it is to work together to try to obtain the resources that seniors deserve.

Carmelle says that what excites her about Mass Senior Action is the togetherness -- at Mass



Senior Action, we do everything together. We meet together, we plan together, and we work on our issues together. Carmelle appreciates the community that is Mass Senior Action, and says that even when she doesn't feel well, her commitment to Mass Senior Action helps keep her going.



Above: Kiki Chaiton and Elisabeth Daley at a North Shore Candidates forum.

Below: Boston member Phyllis Vincent represents the chapter at an event with Mayor Walsh.



Above: Longtime, Social Justice Warrior Carrie Haymon recently passed, and will be greatly missed. Pictured with her daughter Cindy Walker, who now works at MSAC.



Above: Bristol Cty President George Smith and N. Shore members Mary Joyner and Barbara Monteiro at the state house building senior power.



Above: Pearl Corson, who recently passed on her 96th birthday, and Richard Smith getting the vote out!

Below: Gr. Springfield members ask Senator Welch - Why Not Mass?!!





Senior Action Leader

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Your Support keeps the action in Mass Senior Action

Donations are tax deductible and greatly appreciated.

Mass Senior Action Council is the only organization in Massachusetts that empowers lower income seniors to have a direct voice on public policy and community issues that affect their health and economic well-being, as well as tens of thousands of others in their communities. With 10,000 people turning 65 each day in the United States, we need to

build the voice of seniors more than ever.

Through Mass Senior Action, hundreds of seniors develop the skills and confidence to become effective agents of community change – leaders who stand up for themselves and for future generations. They push through their own personal challenges and frailties to dedicate their time and experience to improve

the quality of life for all of us. Will you stand with them?

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