



[OPS Report from Maine - by Julie Keller Pease MD, \[jkpeasemd@gmail.com\]\(mailto:jkpeasemd@gmail.com\)](#)

Maine AllCare continues to build a grassroots movement for publicly funded universal healthcare. Last year (2017) the Maine AllCare board raised money to hire two field organizers for 6 months. The organizers helped us to start 6 additional chapters, and recruited people to volunteer their time at fairs and farmers markets around the state and at the polls last fall, to spread the word about universal healthcare while gathering names of supporters, donors and volunteers. Maine AllCare also joined a coalition of groups that organized a successful referendum for Medicaid expansion. We now have 10 chapters. We have identified over 24,000 people across the state who support universal healthcare. One of our volunteers sends a monthly e-newsletter to the 14,000 supporters for whom we have email addresses. We have also solicited and received endorsements from 85 small businesses and other organizations who support our mission. About a year ago we re-vamped and updated our website to make it more user-friendly both for viewers and for posting of news and information. With the help of a few volunteers, the website is managed by our Education and Communications Committee chair.

On May 4, 2017, a hearing was held on two universal healthcare bills at the Maine State House. Maine AllCare, the Southern Maine Workers Center and the Maine State Nurses Association organized a rally in support of universal health care. Several dozen people submitted testimony. This resulted in the creation of a bi-partisan Legislative Task Force on Health Care Coverage for All of Maine which includes legislators and representatives from business and insurance “to study the design and implementation of options for a health care plan that provides coverage for all residents of the State”. http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/bills_128th/billtexts/SP059201.asp They have been holding public hearings and will be submitting their report to the Maine legislature later this year.

This winter at our annual retreat we appointed a five member “writing committee” who created a final draft of our new mission statement, principles and some FAQ’s. They are published on our website and on “rack cards” that we hand out to people at fairs, farmers markets, polling places, forums and other events. Chapters continue to show “Fix-It” and “Now Is the Time” movies at libraries and other places around the state. We have also utilized the Western Washington PNHP short video comparing and contrasting the Swedish and the US systems. A small group of volunteers created a video of Mainers talking about healthcare they have received in various countries around the world. Links to these videos, a reading lists and other resources are posted on our website www.MaineAllCare.org

In March 2018, Maine AllCare received a \$50,000 donation from the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation to fund financial feasibility studies and an operations manager. With a portion of these funds we have commissioned the Maine Center for Economic Policy to do a preliminary financial study of a universal plan for Maine (based on the ColoradoCare model). Maine will face challenges in developing and promoting a state-based plan, as we are an aging, rural and relatively poor state with high per capita health costs. We feel that we need to have good data in order to address the inevitable questions posed by our skeptics and our opponents.

Our Portland chapter organized and published a gubernatorial and state legislative candidate survey and analysis which received some press coverage from the Portland Press Herald. Every one of the 7 Democratic gubernatorial candidates and all 4 of the Democratic candidates for the 2nd District Congressional seat were in favor of universal health care, most of them specifically supporting “Medicare for All”. (1st District Congresswoman Chellie Pingree is one of the original co-sponsors of HR676.)

In early May 2018 our Waldo County chapter held a successful educational and fundraising event in Belfast Maine. Folks from all over Waldo County and beyond congregated at the Belfast Boathouse, while the Belfast Fiddlers played toe-tapping music and the evening sun sparkled on Penobscot Bay. Music, speeches, and conversation were followed by several rounds of “Health Care Jeopardy,” a game show revealing surprising information on the state of health care in America.

Last but certainly not least, this month (June 2018) the board hired Maine AllCare's first executive director and re-hired our two field organizers, who will boost our grassroots and “grasstops” efforts, with the goal of the establishment of publicly funded healthcare coverage for all Maine residents in 2020, via legislation or (more likely) via a successful citizens referendum.