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Healthcare Is a Human Right

National Bulletin

June 2014

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Calendar

- June 4, Frederick County, Maryland: Healthcare Is a Human Right-Maryland hosted a [People's Health Forum](#) with Frederick County candidates.
- June 6, Portland, Oregon: James Haslam from the Vermont Workers' Center [spoke at an event](#) hosted by Portland's Jobs with Justice Health Care Committee.
- June 7, Portland, Maine: Southern Maine Workers' Center membership meeting.
- June 9, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Put People First! PA joined its allies in the Cover the Commonwealth Coalition in a [rally at the Capitol](#) to demand that the State expand Medicaid.
- June 13, Portland, Maine: Southern Maine Workers' Center hosts a [reading of the play Waiting for Lefty](#).
- June 14, Portland, Oregon: Health Care for All-Oregon's third [annual meeting](#).
- July 19, Portland, Maine: "Strangers into Neighbors" project launch at the Southern Maine Workers' Center.
- July 22, Portland, Maine: Southern Maine Workers' Center members meeting focused on messaging and strategy for the Governor's race.

Campaign news

Vermont

The Vermont Workers' Center's Healthcare Is a Human Right campaign secured several policy wins during a tough legislative session that ended in early May. The legislature passed a general health care bill that included language from the campaign's own bill. [The campaign won:](#)

- Every Vermont resident's right to health care is now written into law
- Health care has to be financed through equitable taxes (although the definition of "taxes" remains contentious)
- Financing has to be sufficient to provide the health services people need

The campaign succeeded in defeating:

- Exclusions that would have undermined universality by leaving out Medicare recipients and members of the military
- An attempt to limit the health benefits that Green Mountain Care will provide

This means the campaign was able to reaffirm the importance of universal, equitable health care, even though the bill passed includes no concrete measures yes for implementing Green Mountain Care. A big struggle lies ahead for the upcoming election and the 2015 legislative session.

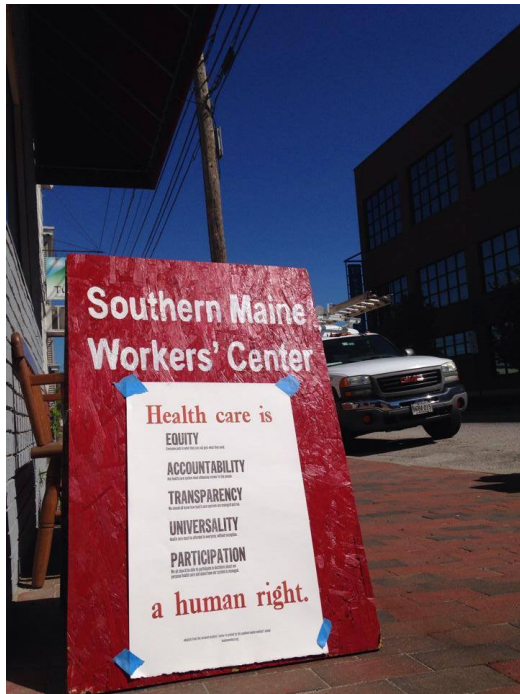


Meanwhile the Workers' Center's annual May Day event and rally drew hundreds of members and allies, including leaders from Maine, Maryland, Pennsylvania, along with NESRI staff. The rally concluded with the proclamation of [a unity petition](#) demanding the full implementation of Vermont's universal health care law. Joining together with other health care advocacy groups, the campaign will collect tens of thousands of petitions across the state over the next few

months. That same day, the Healthcare Is a Human Right campaign received great recognition in an [article on AlterNet](#), which remarked that “a people’s movement has risen up and is leading the way to establishing the first genuinely universal healthcare system in the country.”

On June 1, the leadership bodies of the Vermont Workers’ Center came together for a planning day, and agreed on a big and bold base-building push in order to come out of the election season with a clear mandate for the full, strong, and timely implementation of universal health care and the passage of equitable financing in 2015.

Maine



Coming off of a membership meeting last Saturday, the Southern Maine Workers’ Center is getting ready to grow Maine’s Healthcare Is a Human Right movement this summer. The Workers’ Center is launching a project called “Strangers into Neighbors” in which leaders will spend four weeks going out in their communities and to events like state fairs, Southern Maine Pride, and The Moxie Festival to survey people about their health care access and the human right to health care. The project will launch on July 19 with a kick-off event featuring a training on survey collection and a screen-printing station for T-shirts. On August 16, at the end of the four weeks, the Maine State Nurses Association will join the Workers’ Center in hosting a picnic and celebration bringing Healthcare Is a Human Right leaders together with people who heard about the campaign through Strangers into Neighbors and are interested in getting involved.

Maryland

[Healthcare Is a Human Right-Maryland](#) leaders joined with allies in Washington DC in the first-ever National Lobby Day for Single Payer held on May 22. The leaders, including doctors and people struggling with medical debt, shared their testimonies and presented [findings](#) from their survey of over 850 people in 10 Maryland counties on health care access and opinions. In

the next month, HCHR-MD will publish a report with [NESRI](#) on the human right to health care in Maryland. The report draws on people's testimonies and the results of the survey. On May 21, a day ahead of the Lobby Day, HCHR-MD board member Dr. Margaret Flowers spoke on a [single-payer health care panel](#) hosted by Senator Bernie Sanders. "Our market-based system will continue to increase health care spending, leave people out and result in poor health outcomes because the bottom line is profit, not health," [said Flowers](#).

Pennsylvania

A [PPF-PA](#) team of a dozen members recently knocked on over 500 doors in three Philadelphia neighborhoods, collecting surveys about how residents have been impacted by the health care crisis, particularly Pennsylvania's Medicaid gap. The members got a great response, and are now following up with over 100 new contacts who filled out surveys to set up one-on-ones and invite people to a PPF orientation hosted by a member in their neighborhood.

Out in Pittsburgh, Jonathan Kissam from the Vermont Workers' Center [spoke on May 6](#) about Vermont's Healthcare Is a Human Right campaign and the movement that's now growing across Pennsylvania.

In Luzerne County, PPF member Deborah Payson explained in a [letter to the editor](#) in a local paper how Governor Corbett's plan to privatize Medicaid would hurt the poor.

PPF Coordinating Council member Nijmie Dzurinko joined Mark Dudzik from the [Labor Campaign for Single Payer](#) and Marty Harrison from nurses union [PASNAP](#) to talk about the human right to health care on television talk show The Spark. View the [full 30-minute episode](#), or a [short clip](#) in which Dzurinko explains that it will take a mass movement to realize our human right to health care.

Oregon

James Haslam from the Vermont Workers' Center [spoke at a Health Care for All Oregon event](#), sharing the stage with State Senator Michael Dembrew. Both stressed the role of a strong grassroots movement in making change possible, and James urged the campaign to approach their organizing and policy work through the lens of the human rights principles.

Health news

Labor organizing for universal health care: As Healthcare Is a Human Right campaigns organize for state health care systems based on human rights, [Labor for Single Payer](#) is also intensifying its support for state-based campaigns. Citing the Vermont Workers' Center and Maine's Healthcare Is a Human Right campaign, Labor for Single Payer organizers Mark Dudzik and Jenny Brown [wrote in LaborNotes](#) that states offer possibilities for real health care changes—changes that are not possible at this point in Washington, DC. Dudzik also spoke at the Left Forum with NESRI's Anja Rudiger on May 31 on a panel called [Health Care Justice](#):

[Single Payer and Labor's Continuing Battle](#), where they and other panelists discussed common cause between labor's single payer campaigns and the Healthcare Is a Human Right movement.

Nurses around the world rally for the human right to health care: Global Nurses United coordinated [rallies in 12 countries](#) for nurses week May 6-12 under a common theme of "Healthcare Is a Human Right." Nurses rallied in Guatemala for equitable taxation to fund public health care services, in the Dominican Republic for public health and against privatization, in Korea and Canada for safe staffing, and in the U.S. in Maine, Illinois, Washington, D.C., California, Florida, Minnesota, and Texas.



Moral Missouri movement kicks off: Over 300 people [rallied and sang](#) in the Missouri State Senate chamber on May 6 as part of the new Moral Missouri movement, inspired by North Carolina's Moral Mondays. Moral Missouri has emerged from an alliance of faith, community, and labor groups, and is calling for Medicaid expansion and also calling attention to public education, voting rights, criminal justice, predatory lending, and the minimum wage. Advocacy organization [Missouri Healthcare for All](#) has also held several "mini lobby days" in which 60-100 turn out at the Capitol to hold prayer vigils, share their testimonies, and speak with legislators. The Missouri legislature adjourned for the year without expanding Medicaid, but people are continuing to organize.



World Health Assembly faults focus on insurance model: At the recent World Health Assembly in Geneva, civil society groups [criticized](#) many countries' continued focus on insurance schemes in the push for [universal health coverage](#) (UHC), rather than guaranteed access to health care, in the Global South. A recent [report](#) from the Municipal Services Project contrasts Costa Rica's universal health care model with Chile's universal health coverage, and argues that "re-imagining public health care – rather than the private sellout of health systems via UHC – is ... the only way forward in building truly *universal* health outcomes."

Enrollment in problematic private "Medicare Advantage" plans grows: Medicare Advantage is a program in which [health care is outsourced by transferring public money to private insurance companies](#). According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, [enrollment in Medicare Advantage plans is growing](#). Sixteen million people, or 30% of people on Medicare, now have these privatized health plans, up from 24% in 2010. One of the biggest problems with these private plans is that they require people to pay thousands of dollars in copays, deductibles, and other out-of-pocket expenses that can prevent people from accessing the care they need: 44% of people with Medicare Advantage plans have out-of-pocket spending limits over \$5,000, almost twice the rate compared to 2011.

More states try to privatize Medicaid: Earlier this spring Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett proposed expanding Medicaid, but doing it by privatizing the program. By using public Medicaid funds to subsidize private health insurance plans, Corbett's proposal would transfer public money to private companies. The *New York Times* [reports](#) that political leaders in Arkansas, Indiana, Michigan, and Utah are now following Corbett's lead. What the *Times* and other media missing is that the politicians, who previously opposed Medicaid expansion, are now advocating for expansion not to guarantee health care access to more people, but as a back-door way to further privatize health care and boost profits for insurance companies in their states.

Health Insurance CEO pay skyrockets: Healthcare Now! has a [released a report](#) showing that CEOs of Fortune 500 health insurance companies earn an average of \$13.9 million per year, or about \$38,000 per day, in 2013, an increase of about 20% over 2012.

If you have questions, have anything you want to see in the HCHR Bulletin, or have a story to share, contact ben@nesri.org.