

Patient safety and quality of life at stake

By Sandy Eaton

"Is that to save the hospital?" asked a woman outside a local supermarket a few weeks ago as I collected signatures to put a non-binding question on the ballot. I only thought for a split second before I answered in the affirmative.

The woman was the mother of one of my co-workers at Quincy Medical Center, a facility threatened with going under, where the administration has chosen to attack the nurses with a 3 percent wage roll-back, 5 percent health insurance cost shifting and other drastic measures as a solution.

The petition in my hand was to place a question on the November ballot pressing the state representative in the area to support legislation that would establish health care as a human right by creating a single-payer, Medicare-for-all system in the commonwealth.

She quickly signed the petition.

The fight to create a just health care system in Massachusetts and nationally goes on, a system in which nurses and other health care professionals are valued instead of scape-goated. In the free fall of the marketplace, there are winners and losers. In health care, we cannot afford any more losers. We need to reshape the system in which we labor in order to implement fully our mandate "to work for the improvement and availability of health care services for all people."

The Massachusetts Campaign for Health Care Justice, launched in January by Mass-Care and Jobs with Justice, will have non-binding, single payer questions on the ballot in 14 representative districts this November. The language of the ballot question is below, as is a list of the 14 districts.

"Shall the representative from this district be instructed to support legislation that would establish health care as a human right regardless of age, state of health or employment status, by creating a single payer health insurance system like Medicare that is comprehensive, cost effective, and publicly provided to all residents of Massachusetts?"

This question will appear on the Nov. 2 ballot in these districts: 2nd Berkshire, 4th Berkshire, 1st Franklin, 8th Hampden, 4th Middlesex, 13th Middlesex, 14th Middlesex, 29th Middlesex, 5th Norfolk, 11th Norfolk, 12th Norfolk, 11th Suffolk, 15th Suffolk and 13th Worcester.

These districts cover all or part of these communities: Acton, Alford, Ashfield, Becket, Belchertown, Bernardston, Blandford, Braintree, Brookline, Buckland, Cambridge, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Cheshire, Chester, Chesterfield, Chicopee, Colrain, Concord, Conway, Cummington, Dalton, Dedham, Deerfield, Dorchester, Egremont, Goshen, Great Barrington, Hampden, Hancock, Hinsdale, Huntington, Jamaica Plain, Lanesborough, Lee, Lenox, Leverett, Leyden, Lincoln, Marlborough, Middlefield, Mission Hill, Montague, Monterey, Mount Washington, New Ashford, New Marlborough, New Salem, Northfield, Norwood, Otis, Paxton, Pelham, Peru, Pittsfield, Plainfield, Richmond, Roxbury, Sandisfield, Sheffield, Shelburne, Stockbridge, Shutesbury, Sudbury, Sunderland, Tolland, Tyringham, Walpole, Washington, Watertown, Wayland, Wendell, West Stockbridge, Westwood, Whately, Williamsburg, Windsor, Worcester and Worthington.

This means that you may have a chance to vote for health care justice. To get involved in local coalitions building this campaign, contact:

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