

## **Talking Points for Local Government Officials and Media**

Local officials and media will be interested in how a Medicare for All will specifically benefit their city, town or county. Local governments often must deal most directly with the consequences of our unaffordable, fragmented, and inequitable health insurance system. Thus, local governments have much to gain from a single-payer Medicare for All system.

When communicating the importance of your local resolution in support of Medicare for All with local officials, in press releases, and letters to the editor, the most important place to start is to share the real-life stories of community members who are suffering under our fragmented and unaffordable healthcare system. You will not have to go far to collect such stories as most everyone has a loved one who has been affected.

And then make these links local government realities:

- By ensuring access to needed care throughout people's lives, Medicare for All would increase the well-being of all the residents of your community by keeping people healthier and ending the risk of falling into debt or facing bankruptcy due to medical expenses.
  - The Medicare for All Act of 2019 guarantees comprehensive and quality care for all, without copays, deductibles or high out-of-pocket costs. No one can be denied care or forced to use an emergency room because s/he has no doctor or health insurance, and no one will be forced into poverty due to a health crisis.
  - The Medicare for All Act of 2019 eliminates the complexity of the existing health care system and ends all co-pays, deductibles and out-of-pocket costs while providing comprehensive coverage that includes vision, dental and long-term care.
  - Local governments often provide front-line response for community members who fall into poverty due to medical debt-related bankruptcies or experience deteriorating health or even die needlessly due to a lack of adequate health insurance.
  - If your community's residents do not have health insurance, they may not be able to get the preventive care they need or may delay seeking treatment for illnesses, for fear of the cost. As a result, uninsured Americans end up using the

emergency rooms more frequently than those with insurance, and local governments often end up footing the bill. In addition, local social services for people experiencing homelessness, hunger, substance use disorders, or mental illness are forced to take on care for members of the community that are left behind due to our current healthcare system that prioritizes profit over care.

- An expanded and improved Medicare for All national health insurance system as proposed in the Medicare for All Act of 2019 would lessen the fiscal burden on local governments.
  - Rising healthcare costs have drained local government budgets of the resources they need to rebuild, renovate and restore the vitality of their communities. Across the nation, increasing shares of school board and municipal budgets are needed to meet health benefit costs.
  - Health care is nearly always at the top of the list of collective bargaining with local government employees. Many local governments must hire health care consultants to help them examine and cost out plan changes that are presented to employee unions in an attempt to control costs. It is not uncommon for a large majority of staff time devoted to collective bargaining to be spent on health care issues.
  - Local governments also devote scarce staff resources to navigating the fragmented private health insurance system and must often employ benefits managers who spend much of their time assisting employees in dealing with their private health insurance program.
  - With state and local coffers being emptied by health care costs, many communities face cuts in needed services such as fire protection, medical services for the uninsured, parks and recreation.
  - Researchers from Harvard and the University of Massachusetts Political Economic Research Institute have shown that a single-payer Medicare for All health insurance model would cost most employers significantly less in employer taxes than they currently pay in premiums and would eliminate the administrative waste associated with navigating the fragmented private health insurance system.
- Medicare for All would encourage local entrepreneurs to start businesses and improve the competitiveness of local small and medium businesses.
  - Many local governments focus resources on local economic development, and thus they experience first-hand the economic downsides of tying health insurance benefits to employment. Aspiring entrepreneurs in the community who would like to start their own business often feel tied to their current job by their

health insurance benefits, and thus are less likely to start their own business. New small businesses often have trouble attracting the employees they need, because they cannot yet offer a health insurance plan.

- Medicare for All would end the burden on local employers to provide health insurance and would free up entrepreneurs to pursue their business ideas without fear of risking the loss of their health insurance, since everyone would be covered regardless of their employment status.