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## St. Louis aldermen unanimously endorse national Medicare for All bill

**Mark Schlinkmann**

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Democratic presidential candidate U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt. speaks at a campaign rally at the Stifel Theatre on Monday, March 9, 2020, in downtown St. Louis. The Missouri presidential primary is Tuesday, March 10. Photo by Laurie Skrivan, [lskrivan@post-dispatch.com](mailto:lskrivan@post-dispatch.com)

Laurie Skrivan

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**ST. LOUIS** — The Board of Aldermen, with no debate, on Friday endorsed a Medicare for All bill pushed by U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vermont, and progressive Democrats in Congress.

The board on a voice vote passed a resolution backing the idea. No one opposed the resolution, sponsored by Alderman Pam Boyd, 27th Ward.

At an aldermanic committee hearing Thursday, Dr. Ed Weisbart, a local physician, said the resolution is part of a nationwide effort to get municipal governing bodies to endorse the idea. St. Louis is the 98th city to adopt such a resolution, said a spokeswoman for **Public Citizen**, a nonprofit advocacy group.

“It’s one more argument that ... the country is asking for this,” said Weisbart, who chairs the Missouri chapter of **Physicians for a National Health Program**.

Also speaking in favor was Angela Brown, CEO of the **St. Louis Regional Health Commission**.

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She said the plan would offer “a system everyone can really access when it’s needed.” She said the coronavirus pandemic had highlighted longstanding inequities in health care that a single-payer plan could address.

Boyd, the resolution sponsor, said the current system of private insurance plans is confusing.

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Another supporter, Alderman Christine Ingrassia, 6th Ward, said people are “falling through the cracks” under the current system.

**More than 30 million Americans lack health insurance coverage**, according to estimates by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The aldermanic resolution coincides with Sanders’ introduction this week of the Medicare for All Act of 2022 in the U.S. Senate.

The bill, which has 15 co-sponsors, proposes a four-year phased expansion of the existing Medicare program.

In the first year, the eligibility age would be lowered from the current 65 to 55, and benefits to older beneficiaries would be expanded to include dental care, vision care, hearing aids, prescription drug benefits and home and community-based care. Additionally, all children under 18 would be covered, according to a summary of the measure. The eligibility age would drop to 45 in the second year, 35 in the third, and include everybody else in the fourth year.

**Sanders has argued** that while the program expansion would be expensive, it would be less costly than the current for-profit system.

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