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Health Matters

## St. Louis takes healthy step of endorsing Medicare for All

‘It’s time to reform our health care system’

Alvin A. Reid | The St. Louis American

May 24, 2022



Alderwoman Pam Boyd

Photo Courtesy of KSDK

St. Louis is now among more than 90 American cities whose governing bodies have passed Medicare for All People resolutions of support.

Alderwoman Pam Boyd introduced the proposal as Resolution 25. After clearing the Board of Aldermen Health and Services Committee, it was passed by the full board on May 13.

People in St. Louis are hurting. They can't afford to see a doctor, and they really can't afford to get sick," Boyd said.

"With Medicare for All, everyone can get the healthcare we need, the prescription drugs that can keep us alive, and the peace of mind to not worry about deciding between our medicine and the roof over our heads."

Dr. Ed Weisbart, Physicians for a National Health Program - Missouri chapter chair, said during the committee hearing that America spends double on healthcare than any other country.

"[Medicare for All] would reduce that. This comes down to plain, old morality. It makes me furious to see the moral injustice," said Weisbart, who also serves on the national board.

Angela Brown, St. Louis Regional Health Commission CEO, said "access to health care continues to be a public health crisis."

"We have developed 'sick care system' that prevents our most vulnerable populations from accessing health care until there is an extreme crisis. We recognize it's time to transform our health care system into a system everyone can access when needed."

Brown said the pandemic illuminated discrepancies in health care, which could be reduced if Medicare for All became mandated by Congress.

"Medicare for All is the most valid means of insuring health care coverage for all Americans and a step toward achieving zero health disparities in our region," she said.

U.S. Rep Cori Bush is among the original cosponsors of HR 1976, a proposed bill that would create Medicare for All. It now has 121 cosponsors.

"Medicare for all is a transformational policy change that would implement a national, single-payer universal health care system that guarantees comprehensive health care coverage to every person in America and end the for-profit, privatized, broken system we have in place now," Bush said during a House Oversight Committee hearing on March 30, 2022.

"I have personally borne witness to the stark inequities faced by uninsured and under-insured patients during my tenure as a registered nurse. For some people, it's hard to imagine rationing expensive medication like insulin; skipping dialysis appointments; forgoing surgical procedures; or

refusing medical care entirely. People are having to choose between their life or a lifetime of medical debt.”

According to Physicians for a National Health Program, Medicare for All could:

- Expand Medicare’s benefit design to include coverage of hearing, vision, dentistry, prescription drugs, and long-term care
- Include a full choice of physicians and hospitals and eliminating narrow “networks”
- Eliminate copays, deductibles, and need to purchase supplemental policies
- Eliminate individual premiums, which would be funded through an equitable tax model

The benefits of Medicare for St. Louis include improved health and health equity of residents and a lessened financial burden on the city’s budget

Many St. Louisans depend on emergency rooms as the only realistic healthcare option, at significant cost to the city and local business community, according to Weisbart.

“Medicare for All improves health equity by ensuring everyone has affordable access to needed healthcare throughout their life.”

Medicare for All is also endorsed by: Missourians for Single Payer Physicians for a National Health Program; Mound City Medical Forum; Students for a National Health Program-St. Louis University Chapter; Consumers Council of Missouri Green Party of St. Louis; Missouri Health Care for All; National Nurses United at St. Louis University Hospital; Democratic Socialists of America-St. Louis Chapter; League of Women Voters-Metro St. Louis Chapter; Missouri Jobs with Justice; and the Ethical Society of St. Louis.