While Massachusetts has made meaningful strides in health care reform, the state has long ignored the problems as they apply to young adults. House 63 provides Massachusetts with the opportunity to prove its commitment to the young adult population by granting them an affordable health care option.

**MassHealth Expansion for Young Adults**

**The Bill**
Final Draft H63: “An Act Ensuring Access to Basic Health Care for Children and Young Adults”

**Elevator Speech**
Representative [Name], I am so happy that I ran into you! As future leaders of our state, I am sure you would agree that the health and well-being of young adults is important not just to them, but to the entire Commonwealth. Currently, young adults must bear the burden of a health care system that views them as invincible. MassHealth Legislation drops coverage for enrolled young adults upon their 19th birthday, leaving them with inadequate coverage options, and allowing for any potential health conditions, even a benign one, to progress, posing significant risk to their health and future productivity. I know that you and your constituents are concerned about the tight budget. While expanding health care programs may seem inappropriate, many of your constituents have children of their own, and if it were their kids, they would want what's best for them. While Chapter 58 helped to ensure health care security for the majority of Massachusetts residents, young adults and students were systematically excluded from the levels of reform and care that are granted to everyone else in the state. We believe that MassHealth reform will begin to fix this problem, by ensuring continuous coverage for young adults. An investment in the health of young adults is an investment in the future economic productivity of
Massachusetts. By urging House Speaker DeLeo to bring House Bill 63 to the floor for a vote, you will be a role model to the future leaders of the State.

■ Excerpts from Storybook

Aaron Marden, student organizer and founder of the Student Health Organizing Coalition (SHOC): “When the Commonwealth of Massachusetts enacted health care reform, lawmakers neglected a large segment of the population: students, like me.”

Melissa’s Story: Melissa is a college student who had to go off of her MassHealth when she qualified for a QSHIP plan, making it nearly impossible for her to get the prescription drugs she needed to help mitigate the affects of her learning disabilities.

Child Health Access Coalition: As the writers of this bill, the coalition recognizes the important role that continuity of care plays in the delivery of high quality health care. Expanding MassHealth to college students would ensure a more continuous health care system

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Shanna

From a meeting with the legal counsel of Representative Khan, co-sponsor of the bill

This meeting took place on one of our class visits to the State House. Sari and I met with the legal counsel to discuss the progress of the bill, alert them of our support, and ask them when they thought the hearing for the bill would be scheduled. We found out a lot of useful information. First of all, this was the second time a MassHealth expansion bill had been filed, however, as we had already known, it is not a favorable bill, because many people think that the state cannot afford to expand MassHealth coverage, and therefore, the bill usually dies. However, Representative Khan’s office assured us that they would not hold the bill up, and that it was actually one of their priorities to have some movement on it.

Unfortunately, the hearing for the bill will not take place until the fall, so that is not something that we will be able to attend. An interesting note, when we introduced ourselves and said we are from Brandeis the receptionist said, “Oh yes, Brandeis is a great school! We get so many student advocates from that place, you guys are really learning how to make a difference.”

Sari

I met with Representative Ruth Balser and her Legislative Aide, Brendan Morris today and discussed the history of the MassHealth Expansion Bill. The meeting was arranged with a youth advocacy organization called Y MORE to discuss their budget priorities for FY12. Upon entering Representative Balser’s office, I introduced myself as a constituent and a Brandeis student and briefly explained my reasons for joining the Y MORE legislative visit. I notified both Brendan and Representative Balser that I would be visiting the State House the next day with my class and would like to set up a time to meet with them. Fortunately, Brendan was available after the Y MORE meeting so I had the opportunity to sit down with him to discuss the bill. He did not know very much about the bill during our meeting, so I had a chance to describe the bill and practice my elevator speech. Since Representative Balser is a co-sponsor, I did not try to convince Brendan to support the bill. I focused more on explaining the issue that the bill addresses. We had a slight miscommunication regarding the Affordable Care Act. I did not do a good job in distinguishing between expanding health insurance for young adults by letting them stay on their parents’ insurance and expanding access to Medicaid for young adults. I was trying to explain that expansion of Medicaid has not yet been implemented and will only go into effect in January 2014, but Brendan thought I was talking about the other expansion of health care access for young adults. Despite the confusion, Brendan clarified important holes in our research regarding the history of the bill and its scheduled hearings. He said he would send me an e-mail with more information and he followed through with his promise. From his e-mail, I learned that H63 is a re-file from the last legislative session and did not get enough support in the House Ways and Means Committee because the opposition argued that Massachusetts could not afford this expansion. He confirmed that the hearing is likely to be scheduled for the fall. I really enjoyed sitting down with Brendan and felt that the sense of urgency in my speech may have led him to respond so promptly.
Update (May 2011)
The bill received a hearing in the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities in late April, for which Shana and Sari submitted written testimony.

For more information
Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services

The Kaiser Foundation
www.kff.org/medicaid/upload/8057.pdf

Enrollment and Disenrollment in MassHealth and Commonwealth Care
www.massmedicaid.org/~/media/MMPI/Files/2010_4_21_disenrollment_mh_cc.pdf