



Labor Extension Bulletin

A Publication of the University of Massachusetts Labor Extension Program

UMASS AMHERST ■ UMASS BOSTON ■ UMASS DARTMOUTH ■ UMASS LOWELL

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FIGHTING THROUGH DISASTERS: What Labor Can Learn from COVID

“Disasters are clarifying moments.” That was how Kathleen Brown from the Graduate Employee’s Organization at the University of Michigan framed her presentation on March 26 at the Boston Labor Conference, the annual conference hosted by UMass Boston’s Labor Resource Center. The theme of the conference was the pandemic and labor, and many presenters shared Brown’s assessment that the pandemic made visible the limitations and outright failures of our social and economic structures in addressing the needs of the working class.

Examples of these failures ranged widely. We heard about direct care workers in nursing homes forced to work while the employer refused to provide gowns, gloves, and masks; hotel and restaurant workers without any work; women workers forced to quit their jobs in order take care of children whose public schools were closed; and many more. These stories are familiar to us; we’ve heard about them and read about them time and time again over the past two years.

The presenters didn’t leave the analysis there, though. They explored what workers—unionized and not-yet-unionized—have done to fight back. Here are just a few of their stories.

Kathleen Brown recounted her union’s campaign and strike over the cutting of graduate assistantships during the pandemic. Through the campaign, the students exposed the fact that their public university was cutting graduate assistantships while turning a profit, shining a bright light on the university’s priorities and their failure to live up to their mission to educate students. When the campus then hired armed police to monitor and enforce masking on campus, the union expanded their campaign to link together their jobs, public health, and the behavior of police on campus (geo3550.org/2020/09/04/geos-demands-for-a-safe-and-just-pandemic-response-for-all). Making the connections between these issues politicized their members and built enough support for the union to go on strike.

Connor Harney told the story of the creation and work of the Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee (EWOC) in early 2020 (workerorganizing.org). EWOC is a partnership between the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE), designed to put workers without unions in touch with trained volunteer organizers. The organizers help workers address concerns directly related to COVID, as well as longer-term concerns such as job security, fair scheduling, and anti-racist procedures. This effort was not limited by sector, workplace size, or even the probability of success. Instead, the organizers were committed to support any worker who sought help to help them become “lifelong” organizers: people who will continue to organize their workplace or



help their family, friends, community members fight for their own rights and their dignity at work.

Carlos Aramayo, president of Unite Here Local 26, reported on how his members organized in the face of both mass layoffs and unsafe work. As the pandemic dragged on, it became clear that management of unionized and ununionized hotels were taking advantage of the crisis to fire their workers in order to reduce the workforce and open the door for subcontracting. The union responded by launching a campaign to extend the recall rights for all hotel workers, union and non-union. The campaign caught the public’s attention through media stories, statements of support from public figures, public listening sessions with politicians, and mass actions. The campaign led to every union hotel agreeing to protect workers’ jobs, and to the city of Providence RI passing a law guaranteeing the rights of all hotel workers to return to their jobs after the pandemic.

Puya Gerami explained how a campaign to protect direct care workers in CT grew into the Recovery for All coalition ([recoveryforallct.com/coalition](https://recoveryforallct.com/)). Unionized workers were facing horrific conditions in nursing homes which resulted in many union members dying from COVID. Media attention helped to expose the working conditions and pressure employers to take responsibility for workplace health and safety. But the campaign didn’t end there. The workers joined with community members and other unions to expose the inequities in their state where essential workers had to fight for safe working conditions while billionaires grew more and more wealthy. The coalition that has grown out of this effort continues to push for broad demands to enact public spending and public policies that serve workers and their communities.

(Continued on back page.)

Around THE STATE

Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD) Summer Institute, June 25 online and June 26 in person

Location: Zoom and Worcester

Cost: TBA

Contact: Elizabeth Pellerito, elizabeth_pellerito@uml.edu, 978-934-3137
Our annual Summer Institute will bring women from unions and workers' organizations across New England together for a two-day training. This year, the first day of SI will be online and the second day will be in person in Worcester, MA. Join us to learn leadership and organizing skills in order to build an economy that works for working women.

Bread and Roses Heritage Festival

Labor Day, September 5 from 12pm-5pm

Location: Campagnone Common, Lawrence

Cost: Free

Contact: Elizabeth Pellerito, elizabeth_pellerito@uml.edu, 978-934-3137
This Labor Day, join us on Campagnone Common in Lawrence for a family-friendly festival including music, arts, local vendors, kids' programming, history talks, organizing workshops, and of course the theatre troupe Bread & Puppet.

New Bedford (Art History Architecture) Night with the Worker Art Center

Second Thursday of Every Month at 6pm

Location: Greater Southeastern MA Labor Council 560 Pleasant Street, New Bedford

Cost: Free

Contact: Kim Wilson, kwilson@umassd.edu

Every month the, the Labor Education Center joins two other groups to present an arts event. These evenings feature music, art making opportunities and art shows. In May, the Center's Artist in Residence will present her artwork inspired by oral history interviews with local labor leaders via zoom.

Week of Summer Solidarity: connecting students to local community and labor organizing August 20- August 27

Location: Throughout SE Mass

Contact: Camilo Viveiros, cviveiros@umassd.edu

Students and recent grads will work with organizations doing social and economic justice work and participate in sessions on the labor movement, local organizing, immigrant rights, wage theft, public education, income inequality, worker health and safety, food justice, healthcare, racial and economic justice organizing. To apply, contact cviveiros@umassd.edu

Conference on Racial Justice and the Labor Movement October 13 and 14

Location: UMass Dartmouth campus

Contact: kwilson@umassd.edu

The Labor Education Center is cosponsoring a conference with many campus groups to connect the history and present of coalition work linking the labor movement to the movement for racial justice.

UMass Dartmouth Labor Education Center Annual Awards Banquet

Thursday, October 20, 2022, 6pm to 9pm

Location: Kilburn Mill, New Bedford, MA

Cost: \$50 a ticket

Contact: Kim Wilson at kwilson@umassd.edu

The Annual Award Banquet is a unique opportunity that brings together labor and community leaders who have fought for justice in the workplace and beyond. Approximately 200 union and community activists and leaders attend each year to celebrate and forge our bonds for the work ahead.



Academic Offerings

UMass Amherst

We offer a unique multi-disciplinary program leading toward an MS degree in labor studies. We also offer a one year accelerated residential master's program and a limited-residency Union Leadership and Activism (ULA) program for trade union officers, staff, and activists. The Labor Center is also pleased to have a special ULA for Ed track dedicated to educator activists. Scholarships are available. To learn more about our program, please visit our website at: <http://www.umass.edu/lrrc/>

UMass Boston

UMass Boston's Labor Studies undergraduate program is an interdisciplinary program offering a major, minor, and professional certificate that examines work, the workplace, workers, and their organizations. Drawing on the field of economics, history, political science, sociology and other disciplines, courses in Labor Studies address questions about the role's unions play in affecting the well-being of workers, and how those roles have changed over the course of economic development in the US and globally. You can read more about the program and our courses at: umb.edu/lrc/undergraduate_programs. Please contact Wally.Soper@umb.edu with any questions.

UMass Dartmouth

We are reaching deeper to work with students through creating credit internships. We are also continuing to participate in classes as guest speakers, including community-based art and participatory action research. We are working to create service-learning projects connecting students to organized labor and low-income workers. For more information, visit www.umassd.edu/labored/workwithstudents

UMass Lowell

The program at UMass Lowell continues to attract students to our Labor Studies Minor. Students in our Introduction to Labor Studies course partner with unions and social justice organizations for a variety of service-learning projects, from creating podcasts in partnership with our local cable access station, assisting with local workforce development, and developing social media content for an industrial history museum. In addition to service learning, we provide undergraduate students with access to research opportunities, including conference presentations and the opportunity to submit to the statewide LEP undergraduate journal. For more information about our minor, visit www.uml.edu/FAHSS/Labor-studies

Program Notes

■ UMASS AMHERST

During the 2021-2022 academic year, the UMass Amherst Labor Center has continued to grow our new Masters' track, ULA for Educators. The program is specifically designed to meet the needs of K-12 teacher activists. The courses meet online in the Spring semester allowing teachers to participate in evening classes. Topics include public sector labor law and education policy. The Labor Center is also excited to announce some staff and leadership changes. In January 2022, Nellie Taylor joined the Labor Center as the new Associate Director. Prior to that, Nellie was a high school math teacher in Easthampton as well as being President of the Easthampton Education Association. She brings extensive experience as an educator and union leader. Beginning in August 2022, Associate Professor Jasmine Kerrissey will take over as Director of the Labor Center, replacing Cedric de Leon who led the Center since 2018. Cedric's leadership has been critical to helping to grow the program and support our students during a difficult period of remote learning. Cedric will continue to be engaged in the Labor Center and teach classes in our MS program.

■ UMASS BOSTON

It has been a very busy spring in the LRC! We held our annual Boston Labor Council in person at the Carpenters hall in Dorchester. There was a great turnout of labor activists, union leaders and academics to reflect on what we can learn from the pandemic. (Read more about this in the main article of this Bulletin!) The LRC has also been involved in a research project exploring how to build a sustainable future for General Electric and the workers and community of Lynn, MA. You can read the full report on our website: umb.edu/lrc. Even more exciting, is the news that the LRC has been gifted Steve Kellerman's IWW collection! This collection of documents produced by and about the IWW is being catalogued, and will be available by appointment for researchers, historians, Wobblies and the general public to explore.

■ UMASS DARTMOUTH

At UMass Dartmouth we have continued to build multi-disciplinary connections on campus. In the spring semester we launched our first ever Artist in Residence in conjunction with the College of Visual and Performing Arts. Our Artist in Residence created art inspired by oral histories of local labor leaders. We are excited to continue working with a diverse group of interns, including conducting research about working conditions in the gig economy, research about family programs for a social worker union, and local labor history research focused on Black history, displacement, and discrimination. During Women's History month students and campus leaders participated in "We Were There" a participatory performance depicting women in labor struggles. On Monday April 25, 2022 we held a forum: "Could Bad Jobs be Good Jobs", learning from gig workers and experts including CUNY, Professor of Labor Studies and Sociology, Dr. Stephanie Luce.

■ UMASS LOWELL

The program at UMass Lowell has spent the past year growing our Labor Studies minor on campus, and we are excited to welcome a new cohort of students as we bring back our community-engaged learning partnerships for the first time since the start of the pandemic. We have partnered with organizations, unions and labor councils throughout the Merrimack Valley and North Shore areas to provide training and organizational development. In addition, we have begun a research project investigating the role that unions and workers' organizations have played for women workers during the pandemic. Finally, we continue to support grassroots projects like the Lowell Education Justice Alliance (LEJA) and the Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD).

RESOURCE CORNER: Fair Share and Gig Worker Ballot Initiatives

ORGANIZING

Raise Up Massachusetts (RUM) is a coalition of community organizations, faith-based groups, and labor unions committed to building an economy that invests in families, gives everyone the opportunity to succeed, and creates broadly shared prosperity. Since the coalition came together in 2013, it has nearly doubled wages for hundreds of thousands of working people by winning two increases in the state's minimum wage, won best-in-the-nation earned sick time and paid family and medical leave benefits for workers and their families, led the campaign for the Fair Share Amendment to invest in transportation and public education, and started to build an economy that works for all of MA, not just those at the top. For more information visit www.raiseupma.org.

Massachusetts Is Not for Sale is a grassroots alliance of workers, consumers, advocates, labor unions, civil rights organizations, and other public interest groups, who have come together to oppose a campaign by Uber, Lyft and other Big Tech companies to undermine deserved rights and benefits of workers, consumers and taxpayers under Massachusetts law. For more information and ways to volunteer in the campaign check out www.massachusettsisnotforsale.org.

POLICY

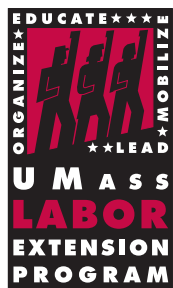
MassBudget is a leading MA think tank credited with providing the research and analysis necessary for the achievement of critical policy advances including: raising the Massachusetts \$15 minimum wage,

establishing Paid Family & Medical Leave, achieving Earned Paid Sick Time, fairer corporate taxes that have netted substantial revenue for vital state programs, boosting take-home pay for low-income families through Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) increases, and playing a substantial role in the passage of the nation's most progressive K-12 education funding bill — the 2019 Student Opportunity Act. For more info visit www.massbudget.org.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

The Gig Economy Data Hub is a collaborative project between the Aspen Institute's Future of Work Initiative and Cornell University's ILR School that aims to provide accessible, comprehensive information for anyone interested in better understanding the scope and nature of independent and gig work today. The Data Hub brings together different data sets – government, private and academic – to identify overlaps, explain discrepancies, and highlight opportunities for further research, making it a valuable online resource for policymakers, journalists, researchers, students, and members of the public alike. www.gigeconomydata.org

Independent Contracting and Gig Work Resource Center is collections of research and publications related to gig work and policy put out by the University of California Berkeley Labor Center. <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/topic/future-of-work-workers/independent-contracting-gig-work/>



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Labor Resource Center
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In the Past 6 months...

The UMass Labor Extension Program has provided trainings on these topics...

- **Stewards as Organizer Training**
Western MA Area Labor Federation
- **A New Stage in the Fight for Farmworker Rights**
Central West Justice Center, Pioneer Valley Workers Center, Local 338, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 338, Migrant Justice, Vermont
- **Organizing Retreat**
SEIU 509 staff
- **Strategic Planning**
CT Roundtable on Climate & Jobs
1199SEIU
- **Know Your Rights Train-the-Trainer**
Jobs With Justice
- **Community Based Research & Community Based Art presentations**
UMass Dartmouth Interns
- **Strategic Planning**
North Shore Labor Council, New Lynn Coalition, Western MA Area Labor Federation, 1199SEIU, Raise Up Massachusetts
- **Workers' Rights Train the Trainer**
Partnered with MA Jobs With Justice
- **Just Transition Retreat**
InterValley Project
- **Health & Safety at Work**
E-Team Machinist Training Program
- **Healing Not Harming: Building a Trauma-Informed Union**
Washington Federation of State Employees (AFSCME Council 28)
- **What We Don't Talk About at Work: Building Collective Responses to Collective Traumas**
Keynote, Bowling Green State University Women's and Gender Center annual conference
- **Worker Health, Public Health, Economic Health: The evolution of domestic workers' self-advocacy during the pandemic**
Carework Network Symposium (Elizabeth Pellerito and Anna Rosinska)
- **An Injury to All: Labor Time, Union Struggles, and the Future of the American Working Class**
Jamie McCallum, Middlebury College

To Contact the UMass Labor Extension Program:

■ UMass Amherst Labor Extension Program

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Amherst, MA 01003-9277 www.umass.edu/lrrc
Clare Hammonds: 413-545-6166 Fax: 413-545-0110
email: chammonds@soc.umass.edu

■ UMass Boston Labor Extension Program

Labor Resource Center, 100 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125-3393 www.umb.edu/lrc
Annetta Argyres: 617-287-7229
email: anneta.argyres@umb.edu

■ UMass Dartmouth Labor Extension Program

Arnold M. Dubin Labor Education Center, 257 Union Street
New Bedford, MA 02740 www.umassd.edu/labored
Camilo Viveiros: 508-910-7108 Fax: 508-910-7120
email: cviveiros@umassd.edu

■ UMass Lowell Labor Extension Program

Department of Sociology, Dugan Hall 205Q, 883 Broadway
Lowell, MA 01854 www.uml.edu/LaborEducation
Elizabeth Pellerito: 978-934-3137 Fax: 978-934-4033
email: Elizabeth_Pellerito@uml.edu

Contact the UMass Labor Extension Program at <http://umasslep.org>

Training through Disasters

(Continued from front page)

Two themes emerged from all the stories shared at the conference. First, the stories remind us that our economic and legal system is structured to undermine working class and labor power. Examples of how executives in both the private and public sectors seek to take advantage of every situation to benefit their own bottom line at the expense of workers came up repeatedly during the conference: from Alex Press's warnings about Amazon's new model of firing employees after one year of employment, to Samir Sonti's analysis of how financial policies governing inflation are designed to drive down wages. This isn't a surprise, but we

need to keep exposing this clear class warfare until all workers can recognize it.

The second theme was that labor must build itself into a political force at the workplace and beyond if we are going to build a society that serves our needs, rather than the desires of the wealthy and privileged. To do this, we must not be content with small wins to our immediate needs. Instead, we must push for ever larger demands, and build a movement that includes all working people and communities.

SPOTLIGHT

on the MA Fair Share Amendment

This November, voters in Massachusetts will decide on a millionaire tax ballot initiative known as the “Fair Share Amendment” (FSA). This important initiative proposes to amend the Massachusetts Constitution, to create an additional tax of four percentage points on the portion of a person’s annual income above \$1 million. The new revenue, approximately \$2 billion a year, would be spent on “quality public education and affordable public colleges and universities, and for the repair and maintenance of roads, bridges and public transportation.” To ensure that the amendment continues to apply only to the highest income taxpayers, who can pay more, the \$1 million threshold would be adjusted each year to reflect cost-of-living increases.

Why is Fair Share so important?

- Fair Share is an important step in the direction of tax fairness. For years, the highest-income households in Massachusetts – those in the top 1% – have paid a smaller share of their income in state and local taxes than any other income group.
- The highest income households, those in the top 1%, have repeatedly benefited from federal tax cuts: 83% of the 2017 tax bill’s benefit went to the top 1%, and in 2020, the federal CARES Act included \$135 billion in tax breaks for wealthy business owners.
- During the first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic, while many workers suffered, 19 billionaires in Massachusetts saw their wealth increase by a total of \$17 billion.

What could the new revenue do?

- Make childcare accessible and affordable for those who need it.
- Repair and sustain our state’s network of roads and bridges.
- Provide necessary funding for K-12, early child education and adult learning programs across the state.
- Modernize the rail and bus system for convenience and affordability.
- Ensure public college students graduate without crushing debt.

For more information:

To learn more about Fair Share and ways to get involved with campaign contact [raiseupma.org](https://www.raiseupma.org).

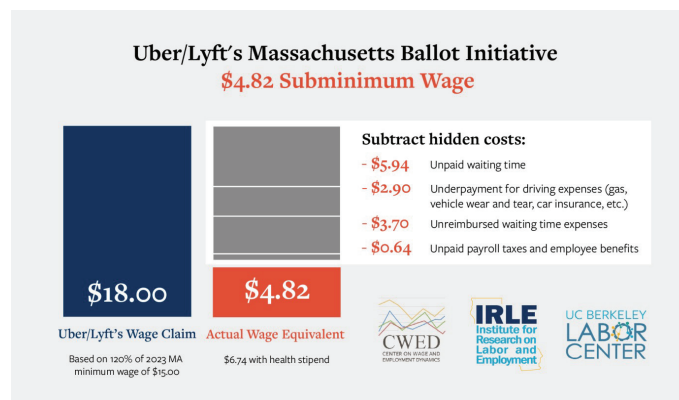
SPOTLIGHT

Classifying Gig Workers (HB 1234)

Another critical ballot question being put to MA voters this November focuses on the legal employment classification of “gig workers.” The proposed law would cement gig workers status as independent contractors rather than employees. This would hold for both ridesharing (e.g. Uber and Lyft) as well as app-based delivery (e.g. Doordash). The law would provide app workers certain limited benefits, including healthcare stipends and paid sick time, but prohibits app worker/drivers from overtime pay, access to unemployment insurance, full reimbursement of business costs, and employer side contributions to Social Security and Medicare. The proposed measure also includes that drivers make 120 percent of the minimum wage—this however is only for hours in which drivers are completing requests, not the total time they spend behind the wheel waiting for rides—plus take home 100 percent of tips. There are currently two versions of the ballot proposal; the core difference between them is one includes mandatory safety training for drivers

What is at stake for labor?

- The proposed law, which is being backed to the tune of \$17 million dollars by large app companies Uber and Lyft- would exclude hundreds of thousands of workers in the Commonwealth from the employment rights and protections set forth in Massachusetts law including access to minimum wage, paid sick time, and paid family leave, unemployment insurance and worker’s compensation, and protections against sexual harassment and racial discrimination at work.
- The proposed law significantly narrows who is an “employee” under Massachusetts law (the so-called ABC Test). Current Massachusetts law includes the critical presumption that any individual “performing any service” on behalf of an employer and (1) is working under that employer’s control, (2) doing work that is performed in the usual course of the employer’s business, or (3) is not holding oneself out as a business independent from an employer is an “employee.”
- The proposed law creates a new set of labor standards that app-based employers (and others) can use to bypass state labor laws.
- A recent report, from the researchers at the University of California- Berkeley Labor Center, estimated drivers working 15 hours per week could seek an hourly wage floor of just \$4.82 when accounting for the time between rides, additional benefit costs and mileage that goes unreimbursed (see below).



For more information:

To learn more about the ballot question and/or to get involved with the “VOTE NO” campaign contact:

MassachusettsIsNotForSale.org