



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation awards \$600,000 in grants to promote the health interests of uninsured and low-income residents (Boston, Fitchburg, Holyoke, Leominster, Shrewsbury, Springfield, Worcester)

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BOSTON — The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation has awarded \$600,000 in grants to 16 community organizations whose mission includes promoting the health care needs of uninsured and low-income residents. The grants, which range from \$25,000 to \$50,000, will be used to fund organizational operating expenses.

“Our grantees bring the voices of our most vulnerable residents to the policy-making table in Massachusetts,” said Sarah Iselin, President of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. “By funding these organizations, we are furthering the mission of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, which is to expand health care access for all residents of the Commonwealth.”

The grants were made in the *Strengthening the Voice for Access* program area, which was established by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation in 2001. The funding is intended to strengthen community-based policy activities, increase citizen participation in public policy development, and promote collaboration among statewide policy and advocacy organizations on health access issues for uninsured and low-income people.

The following organizations have been awarded grants in the *Strengthening the Voice for Access* program area (unless otherwise noted, these organizations are based in Boston):

The Disability Policy Consortium was awarded \$30,000 to continue its work as one of the few statewide, cross-disability organizations participating in ongoing health care policy debates in Massachusetts. It advocates for reducing health care disparities rooted in disability. In 2010, the group will focus on the need for comprehensive statewide data on access to insurance and health care for those with disabilities.

The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization was awarded \$50,000 to continue its work with 70 religious congregations and organizations in the Greater Boston area to promote social justice in the area of health care access. The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization works with

approximately 50,000 people, many of whom are under- or uninsured and helps give voice to the need for insurance affordability.

Health Care for All was awarded \$50,000 to continue its work advocating for comprehensive health care for all Massachusetts residents. Health Care for All's leadership played a key role in bringing the consumer voice to the health care reform debate and has been vigilant in monitoring the implementation of health reform and keeping affordability at the top of the agenda. In 2010, the organization will focus on bringing the consumer's point of view to ongoing discussions around payment reform, addressing health disparities, and maintaining coverage for immigrants.

Health Law Advocates was awarded \$40,000 to continue its legal representation of vulnerable residents who have been denied access to health care. Its current priorities include restoring publicly-subsidized health care benefits to legal immigrants; improving access to behavioral health services for children; and monitoring the implementation of the health reform law.

The Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers (Shrewsbury) was awarded \$40,000 to continue its work organizing community health workers around the state. In 2010, the organization will conduct regional trainings to improve the advocacy skills of community health workers and assist in obtaining certification as a community health worker. It will also focus on bringing the perspectives of community health workers into the debate around national health reform and into the numerous medical home pilot programs underway in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center was awarded \$25,000 to continue its work analyzing the relationships between health care spending, the state budget, and revenue policies. In 2010, the organization will create a public information campaign on how to follow the state budget process and understand how various proposals will impact low-income and vulnerable residents of the state.

The Massachusetts Coalition of School-Based Health Centers was awarded \$25,000 to continue improving children's access to health care through school-based health centers partnered with hospitals, community health centers, and public health departments. Currently, 20,000 children receive health care services through school-based centers. They will work to strengthen and expand the network and to advocate in support of these clinics. In 2010, the organization will also focus on the health needs of those who drop out of school.

Massachusetts Correctional Legal Services was awarded \$35,000 to continue its work as the only organization in the state advocating for the health care needs of the Commonwealth's 25,000 prisoners. In 2010, the organization will expand their work into county jails and focus on making medications to prisoners with HIV or AIDS more accessible.

The Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance was awarded \$30,000 to continue its work advocating for the health care needs of homeless adults. In 2010, the organization will focus on getting Medicaid reimbursement for case management services and sharing data on cost savings that come from coordinating health care among multiple providers.

The Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition was awarded \$50,000 to continue its advocacy for immigrants and refugees across the Commonwealth. In 2010, the organization will focus on restoring publicly-subsidized health care benefits to legal immigrants. It will also promote the recommendations outlined in Governor Deval Patrick's New Americans' Agenda, which the group helped produce in 2009.

The Massachusetts Law Reform Institute was awarded \$45,000 to continue its work preparing legal analyses and promoting policy education around the implementation of health reform, regulating the Safety Net Trust Fund, and improving the operations of MassHealth, the state's Medicaid program. In 2010, the organization will focus on analyzing the impact of budget cuts to health services funded by the state; restoring publicly-subsidized health care benefits to legal

immigrants; and monitoring the implementing of the Community First waiver, which assists elderly and disabled residents in obtaining community-based long-term care services.

The Mass. League of Community Health Centers was awarded \$45,000 to continue its advocacy and organizing on behalf of the state's 52 community health centers. The League will work to monitor health system changes that impact community health centers and their patients. In 2010, the organization will focus on continued access to health care for legal immigrants, payment reform, and expansion of the medical home model of care delivery.

The Massachusetts Senior Action Council was awarded \$40,000 to continue to protect, reform, and increase the enrollment of seniors in Medicare and Prescription Advantage. In 2010 the group will focus on achieving prescription drug affordability and quality home care for seniors with long-term illnesses as well as helping their members advocate for themselves.

Neighbor to Neighbor (Boston, Worcester, Fitchburg, Leominster, Holyoke, and Springfield) was awarded \$35,000 to continue its work advocating for and organizing low-income residents, especially around health access issues. In 2010 the organization will focus on bringing the perspectives of low-income consumers into ongoing discussions around payment reform.

The Pro-Choice Massachusetts Foundation was awarded \$25,000 to work on eliminating barriers to reproductive health care services. In 2010, they will work to ensure that women's health issues are an integral part of state and national health care reform.

The Voice and Future Fund was awarded \$35,000 to continue its work educating low-wage workers, particularly immigrants, about their health access rights and responsibilities. The group also works closely with employers to expand employer sponsored health insurance for low wage workers. In 2010 the organization will focus on bringing the perspectives of low-wage workers to ongoing discussions around state and national health care reform.

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More about the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation

The mission of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation is to expand access to health care. Through grants and policy initiatives, the Foundation works with public and private organizations to broaden health coverage and reduce barriers to care. It focuses on developing measurable and sustainable solutions that benefit uninsured, vulnerable, and low-income individuals and families in the Commonwealth, and served as a catalyst for the pioneering Massachusetts health care reform law passed in 2006. The Foundation was founded in 2001 with an initial endowment of \$55 million from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. The Foundation operates separately from the company and is governed by its own 18-member Board of Directors. It is one of the largest private health philanthropies in New England and in 2007 was awarded the Paul Ylvisaker Award for Public Policy Engagement for its work on Massachusetts health care reform by the Council on Foundations.