



MASSACHUSETTS

2023 Community Benefits Annual Report

as submitted to the Office of the Attorney General, June 1, 2024

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MISSION STATEMENT

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts HMO Blue (the Company or Blue Cross) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan recognized as one of the nation's best for member satisfaction and quality. We count more than 25,000 Massachusetts employers as our customers and serve nearly three million medical members and one million dental members. **We are committed to showing up every day for each of our members and guiding them to the exceptional health care they deserve. Health care that's affordable, equitable and seamless.** Through the investment of resources — time, talent, and financial — we demonstrate our values and commitment to be a thoughtful, community-focused and effective corporate citizen. Refer to Appendix A for an overview of community engagement framework.

Advancing our mission requires dismantling the physical, mental, and emotional barriers to wellness through partnerships with civic and community leaders. This approach is rooted in justice and understanding social factors — at the individual, family, neighborhood, city, state, and national levels — that influence health outcomes. Along with this understanding, we pledge to operate within a context of respect and trust-based philanthropy, a core set of values aimed at advancing equity, changing the power dynamic, and building mutually accountable corporate and community partnerships.

Based on a comprehensive review of community health needs assessments, we focus our community benefits work on upstream factors affecting individual and community health by addressing three impact areas: **chronic disease, mental health/substance use disorder, and access to health care.** This work is accomplished through efforts by both Blue Cross and the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation (the Foundation).

We are deeply committed to help all Massachusetts community members lead healthy lives by striving to create a more equitable and just Commonwealth.

INTERNAL OVERSIGHT AND MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY BENEFITS PROGRAM

Blue Cross' senior leadership team, chaired by the president and chief executive officer, is responsible for ensuring the Community Benefits Program meets the needs of the community at large in a way that successfully leverages our resources and expertise. The team includes the following executives¹:

- Sarah Iselin, President and Chief Executive Officer
- David Corkum, Chief Commercial Officer, Executive Vice President
- Ruby Kam, Chief Financial Officer, Executive Vice President
- Rich Lynch, Chief Operating Officer, Executive Vice President
- Jay McQuaide, Chief Communications and Citizenship Officer, Senior Vice President
- Dawn Perry, Chief Risk and Audit Officer, Senior Counsel and Senior Vice President
- Sandhya Rao, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Senior Vice President
- Candace Reddy, Chief of Staff to the Chief Executive Officer and Senior Vice President, Government and Regulatory Affairs
- Don Savery, General Counsel, Senior Vice President
- Simmi Singh, Chief People Officer, Executive Vice President
- Sukanya Lahiri Soderland, Chief Strategy Officer, Senior Vice President

¹ As of June 2024

The Foundation also is an important component of the Community Benefits Program. Formed in 2001 with an endowment from Blue Cross, this private foundation operates independently from the Company. The Foundation is governed by a 15-member board of directors composed of the following health care and community leaders²:

- Andrew Dreyfus, former President and Chief Executive Officer, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (Chair)
- Patricia Washington, Board Advisor (Vice Chair)
- Zamawa Arenas, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Flowetik
- Carlos Cappas, PsyD, Chief Behavioral Health Officer, Lynn Community Health Center
- J.D. Chesloff, Executive Director, Massachusetts Business Roundtable
- Denise De Las Nueces, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program
- Sandro Galea, MD, DrPH, Dean and Robert A. Knox Professor, Boston University School of Public Health
- Shelly F. Greenfield, MD, MPH, Kristine M. Trustey Endowed Chair in Psychiatry, Chief Academic Officer and Chief of the Division of Women's Mental Health, Mclean Hospital; Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School
- Michael Hunter, Vice President of Business Development, Trinity Financial
- Thea James, MD, Vice President of Mission and Associate Chief Medical Officer, Boston Medical Center; Assistant Professor of Medicine, Boston University School of Medicine
- Thomas H. Lee, Chief Medical Officer, Press Ganey
- Mary Kay Leonard, Independent Consultant
- Antonia McGuire, Senior Consultant, John Snow, Inc.
- Michael Miller, Strategic Policy Director, Community Catalyst
- Sandhya Rao, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Senior Vice President, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

The corporate citizenship team, with input from representatives from all areas of the company, is responsible for setting and successfully executing the Community Benefits Program. Reporting to the chief communications and citizenship officer, **the vice president of corporate citizenship & public affairs' portfolio of responsibilities includes overseeing financial investments in the community, employee civic engagement, climate and health resilience, and public affairs.**

To ensure transparency, **an annual corporate citizenship report is shared with the board of directors**, and the chief communications and citizenship officer meets with the corporate contributions committee of the board and other internal stakeholders for review as needed. In 2024, we will publish our first **impact report**, an evolution of our corporate citizenship report, to showcase progress and challenges within the environmental, social and governance framework.

² As of June 2024

COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

We work in partnership with, and seek input from, a wide range of organizations across the state, as well as national experts, **to assess community health needs and inform a robust portfolio of work across Massachusetts.**

COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

To refine our approach to community health, we engaged a public health consulting firm, Health Resources in Action, in 2020 to review 10 community health needs assessments (CHNA), six community health improvement plans (CHIP), and supporting research studies conducted across the commonwealth from 2017–2020. Refer to Appendix A for a summary of the assessment. The material focused on the populations of highest need (e.g., youth, older adults, and low-income individuals) and helped identify top priorities for our Community Benefits Program: **chronic disease, mental health/substance use disorder, and access to health care.** In 2024, we will conduct another review of CHNA and CHIP assessments to inform our strategy with data-driven, public health research.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

We assess our approach and impact on an ongoing basis. In 2021, through discussion, convenings, collaborations and strategic planning, we evolved our strategic focus to **Health Justice**, prioritizing changes that improve opportunities and health outcomes for everyone, with special attention and commitment to communities most affected by health inequities.

We identified **three interconnected areas of focus** to create sustainable, community-driven change:

- **Food justice:** Ensure access to healthy and culturally relevant food and contribute to building a sustainable food system.
- **Environmental justice:** Overcome the disproportionate impact of pollution and environmental degradation on under-resourced communities.
- **Racial justice:** Eliminate systemic, interpersonal, and institutional racism that contributes to disparate health outcomes.

We employ a **three-pronged strategy** to advance health justice across Massachusetts. Refer to Appendix C for detailed Health Justice Strategy:

- **Strategic partnerships:** Accelerate advances in health justice through multi-year funding, training and facilitation, pro bono support, and networking opportunities for not-for-profit partners. Our **collaborative model** provides multi-year funding, training, facilitation and pro bono support for 3 to 5 organizations working in partnership to propose a new model of community care in a specific community. Our **signature partnership and grants program** provides multi-year funding, training and pro bono support for individual organizations applying for operating support in communities around the state.
- **Investments, engagement, and activism:** Leverage financial investments and volunteer resources to support organizations that focus on health justice.
- **Thought leadership and convenings:** Convene stakeholders to share insights and promising practices around health justice innovation to drive change.

Furthermore, we operate under a **trust-based philanthropy approach** grounded in mutual accountability, trusted philanthropic systems, and community-driven strategic thinking. We engage in **six practices** that change the power dynamics and structural barriers between funders and not-for-profits.

- **Give multi-year, unrestricted funding.** We provide long-term flexible funding to allow organizations to allocate resources where they need it most, spurring innovation and enhanced impact.

- **Do the homework.** We get to know the issues and organizations in our region, saving not-for-profits time in the early stages of the vetting process.
- **Simplify and streamline paperwork.** We focus on building relationships with not-for-profits to save time and gain a deeper understanding of their work.
- **Be transparent and responsive.** We model transparency, power awareness, and vulnerability to build relationships rooted in trust and mutual accountability.
- **Solicit and act on feedback.** Our work is informed by the expertise and experience of partners and communities.
- **Offer support beyond the check.** Responsive, adaptive, and non-monetary support bolsters leadership, capacity, and organizational health.

The Foundation organizes its work under **three strategic focus areas: coverage and care, behavioral health, and structural racism and racial inequities in health.** Under the guidance and leadership of its board and president and chief executive officer, the Foundation identified the following **principles** underlying its work:

- Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.³
- Racism is a public health emergency and health care is a racial and social justice issue.
- The Foundation is **committed to listening to and learning** directly from communities and community members experiencing racism and health inequities.
- The Foundation **invests in community-based, grassroots organizations** led by people of color, who play a crucial role in bringing about racial justice in health care.
- The Foundation works to foster racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion through its grant and consultant partners, policy and research initiatives, convenings, Health Coverage Fellowship, the Massachusetts Institute for Community Health Leadership programs and internal policies, procedures and practices.
- The Foundation is committed to **promoting pragmatic policy solutions** that can effect change in the short-term, while building a framework and a vision for bold, longer-term solutions.
- The Foundation holds itself accountable with metrics developed to measure its impact on processes, relationships and results related to racism and racial inequality in health. The Foundation invites the communities it serves to hold it accountable by sharing these metrics regularly with its partners and requesting feedback.
- Foundation staff is committed to developing their expertise, knowledge and skill in dismantling racism and racial inequities in health from community members experiencing these issues and through professional development and training.
- The Foundation works in close partnership with grant partners while also being cognizant of the power dynamics that are a typical part of the philanthropic relationship.

While the Foundation’s mission has not changed in its 22 years of existence, in 2021, the board acted to update the language of its mission statement to better reflect the above principles and avoid stigmatizing language. Approved by the board in 2021, the statement reads: **The mission of the Foundation is to ensure equitable access to health care for all those in the Commonwealth who are economically, racially, culturally, or socially marginalized.**

Both the Company and the Foundation’s complementary outreach, assessment and evaluation efforts reaffirm that a **health equity lens is pivotal for our Community Benefits Program.** In addition, employee volunteerism, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) and climate and health resilience serve as internal levers to build a healthy and just community for all.⁴

³ World Health Organization (WHO)

⁴ In March 2023, Blue Cross announced that “belonging” will now be part of our diversity, equity and inclusion work (now DEIB), a direct result of employee feedback.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

We interact with **nearly 500 not-for-profits serving communities across Massachusetts to support the efforts of all those in the Commonwealth to live healthier lives.** We engage key business, community, and civic leaders to help identify needs and develop shared goals.

The corporate citizenship department engages with community partners and participates in best practice forums to ensure priorities are current and align with community need. **Team members meet with community partners** on an annual basis either in-person, virtually, or via site visits to understand and reassess funding and civic engagement needs. These meetings provide the opportunity to regularly gather important information about the needs of populations served, better understand each organization's evaluation metrics, and provide feedback and ideas about potential funding proposals.

As a corporate partner, we bring together not-for-profits with similar missions to collaborate and share best practices. **In 2023, we held our third annual "Sharing Challenges, Seeking Solutions"** forum, a series of conversations for not-for-profits addressing health justice across the state. More than 50 not-for-profit leaders came together for a facilitated conversation on **employee wellness**. The participants discussed recruitment and retention strategies, employee burnout, organizational health and other topics. The session featured panelists from Collaborative Parent Leadership Action Network, East Boston Social Centers, GenUnity and Legendary Legacies. Previous conversation catalyst and convening topics included intentionally integrating justice and equity into not-for-profits (2022) and anti-hunger and food justice advocacy (2021).

We have several funding strategies throughout the year:

- **General funding inquiries** can be made in-person, by email or through an online portal on a rolling and ongoing basis. The funding guidelines, which are widely distributed and made available via our [website](#), provide specific instructions for applicants. All requests are carefully considered on a biweekly basis by an internal corporate contributions committee composed of leaders representing diverse business perspectives. Organizations seeking funding are encouraged to speak with corporate citizenship staff to get a complete understanding of our Community Investment Program.
- **Health Justice Partnership and Grant Program** solicits request for general operating and programmatic funding that align with our Health Justice strategy. [Grant guidelines](#) are widely distributed via direct email and across convening organizations, such as Philanthropy Massachusetts, Massachusetts Nonprofit Network, United Way, and others – explain the impact we seek to generate with the funding and provide specific instructions. Applications undergo multiple levels of review and input from select subject matter experts across the company. Applicants are encouraged to speak with corporate citizenship staff as they prepare their proposals to ensure they have a complete understanding of the funding opportunity and can receive preliminary feedback.
- **The Foundation's grants** are offered through program areas that are in direct alignment with the Foundation's strategic focus areas. Most grant programs are multi-year awards, focusing on coverage and care, behavioral health and structural racism and racial inequities in health. The Foundation also awards a limited number of one-year responsive grants to fund projects which empower communities to advance health equity at the community level and which positively impact the health or health care related needs of Massachusetts community members who are economically, socially, culturally or racially marginalized. The Foundation publicly announces all opportunities for new applicants to seek support. The grant guidelines, which are widely distributed and made available via the Foundation's [website](#), explain the impact the Foundation seeks to generate with the funding and provide specific instructions for applying for grants. Once requests are received, they undergo up to two levels of staff review and then up to two levels of board review before grants are awarded. Applicants are encouraged to speak with Foundation staff as they prepare their proposals to ensure they have a complete understanding of the funding opportunity they are pursuing. Foundation staff can provide preliminary feedback and ideas about the applicant's project. All Foundation grant programs include rigorous

evaluation and shared learning components that provide valuable information to both grant partners and program staff and ensure the community investments are in line with the Foundation's mission. Refer to Appendix D for a detailed list of Foundation grant program areas.

- **The Foundation's Catalyst Fund** provides small, one-year, non-renewable, capacity building mini-grants to not-for-profits to help strengthen their capacity to expand access to health care in Massachusetts. The Catalyst Fund is intended to help organizations pay for activities that can strengthen their infrastructure, build capacity, plan and as its name implies, help spark innovation. These grants are funded by Blue Cross employee contributions. Since 2019, Blue Cross has matched all employee donations to the Catalyst Fund, and one hundred percent of the donations are used for grants to not-for-profits, with no funds used for the Foundation's administrative costs. The application process for the Catalyst Fund is conducted on a rolling basis and applications are reviewed monthly by a 12 member committee composed of Blue Cross employees.

In addition to engaging community partners, we share and garner best practices on critical social issues affecting Massachusetts communities. We are a member of several global, national, and regional corporate social responsibility industry groups, including:

- **Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship**, a global, membership-based knowledge center, helps organizations align environmental, social, and corporate governance objectives and business goals to create a more sustainable and prosperous future for all. The center engages a network of more than 500 member companies to share knowledge and expertise about the practice of corporate citizenship through research, executive education, expert insights and tools, and networking opportunities. Members of the corporate citizenship staff serve as subject matter experts in various capacities (e.g., moderator, panelist, advisor, etc.), including 2023 panels focused on virtual volunteering and trust-based philanthropy and volunteerism across different generations in the workforce at the center's annual Global Conference, as well as a presentation on our climate, health and resilience efforts to the health equity advisory board. Blue Cross' vice president of corporate citizenship & public affairs serves as a member of the executive advisory board for the center, representing the Blue Plans, and the senior director of social impact serves as a member of the health equity advisory board.
- The **Community Investments & Partnership Workgroup of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association** gathers corporate social responsibility colleagues across the country to share best practices, discuss national visibility and partnership opportunities, and establish national metrics as they relate to Blue Cross' system-wide community engagement. Blue Cross' vice president of corporate citizenship and public affairs, the senior director of social impact, and the Foundation's administration and strategic initiatives officer are members of this workgroup.
- The **Givers Group** and the **Corporate Volunteer Council** gather groups of regional corporate citizenship professionals to meet regularly and discuss social issues that have an impact on the communities they serve and the not-for-profits making measurable impact in these areas. Together, the groups are better able to identify where funding gaps and civic engagement opportunities may exist.
- **Points of Light Corporate Service Council** is a non-for-profit group that brings together over 65 companies to empower and equip corporate social impact leaders and their teams. As a member, Blue Cross has access to professional development opportunities, thought partnership, industry research and best practices and convenings. For four consecutive years (2000-2023), Blue Cross received the Civic 50 Award, which recognizes the 50 most community-minded companies in the United States.
- The **Massachusetts Nonprofit Network** has more than 700 not-for-profit members across the state with a vast range of sizes, missions and budgets and is the voice of the not-for-profit sector, bringing together not-for-profits, funders, community and business leaders, and elected officials. The network

recognizes that strong not-for-profits build strong communities, and we are proud to work with the network to strengthen the not-for-profit community of the Commonwealth.

- **Philanthropy Massachusetts**, a not-for-profit group that offers networking opportunities, resources, and research and learnings for corporate partners and not-for-profits alike, brings individuals together to share experiences on a professional and personal level and provides leadership on the advancement of philanthropic strategies for public health emergencies and racial injustice. The Foundation's president and CEO serves as the chair of the board of directors.

Information about our Community Benefits Program is made available via the [Company](#) and the [Foundation's](#) websites. Both the [Company](#) and the [Foundation](#) widely distribute and publicize annual reports.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

Our Community Benefits Program is part of an ongoing commitment to the community that extends beyond a one-year timeframe. In 2023, we contributed more than \$14.7 million to nearly 500 not-for-profits in financial, pro bono and in-kind support.

	FINANCIAL INVESTMENTS	PRO-BONO/IN-KIND	TOTAL INVESTMENT
The Company	\$8,779,951	\$1,950,000	\$10,729,951
The Foundation	\$3,649,589	n/a	\$3,649,589
Combined	\$12,429,540		\$14,379,540

This report focuses on three impact areas: chronic disease, mental health/substance use disorder, and access to health care. **Collectively, Blue Cross and the Foundation provided \$11.5 million in financial contributions in direct support of these impact areas.**

CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION: A FOCUS ON HEALTH JUSTICE

Due to longstanding, systemic racial inequities, historically marginalized populations are at increased risk for chronic disease outcomes such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.⁵ We are committed to eliminating health inequities among our members and the community through an ambitious and comprehensive strategy aimed at developing solutions to the root causes of inequities:

- As part of our core operations, **clinical and quality improvement teams are collecting critical member data and working with provider networks to address health inequities in care.**
- Through our corporate citizenship program, we are **expanding the aperture to address specific social factors that influence health outcomes, including food, environmental and racial justice.**
- The Foundation is **leveraging its research expertise, charitable grants, and advocacy programs** to illuminate and address these issues across the Massachusetts health system.

FOOD JUSTICE

Promoting access to healthy food has long been a pillar of our community support. Individuals and families across the Commonwealth, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color, struggle to get access to affordable, healthy food options. The Greater Boston Food Bank released its 2022 Statewide Food Equity and Access report that evaluates the state of food insecurity, equity, and access to nutrition programs in Massachusetts. The survey found that 1.8 million adults in Massachusetts, or 33% of the state's population, reported chronic food insecurity. Regionally, food insecurity varied greatly across Massachusetts, with 29% of households in Eastern Massachusetts — the largest population in the state — experiencing food insecurity. Among households with children, the prevalence of child-level food insecurity is 43% in Western Massachusetts, 41% in Central Massachusetts, and 32% in Eastern Massachusetts⁶.

Our company is committed to helping make sure everyone in Massachusetts can access healthy, affordable, high-quality food that supports their cultural traditions. We work with community members

⁵ Shaw KM, Theis KA, Self-Brown S, Roblin DW, Barker L. 2013. *Chronic Disease Disparities by County Economic Status and Metropolitan Classification, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System*. Prev Chronic Dis 2016;13:160088. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd13.160088>external icon. (Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2016/16_0088.htm).

⁶ Greater Boston Food Bank Third Annual Statewide Report: Opportunities to improve Food Equity and Access in Massachusetts: Ending Hunger Together, May 2023.

across Massachusetts to increase access to culturally relevant foods and reduce food insecurity in the following ways:

- Launched inaugural **food justice cohort** in our Health Justice Partnership and Grant program bringing together eight Massachusetts-based organizations to address environmental and social factors that influence food inequities, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color. Refer to Appendix E for a list of partners.
- Executed year six of our signature **Dot Rx** partnership, based out of Codman Square Health Center to deliver a prescription-based program that connects families with peer health coaches and free or reduced-cost programming (fresh food debit cards, gym memberships, cooking classes, nature-based activities). We amplified the leadership of peer coaches, Dorchester residents who share their own personal health journeys. This leadership and their contributions to the program design and offerings were key to the program. Since 2017, we enrolled over 850 families, connecting them to health and affordable food, gym memberships, free swim lessons, and outdoor activities. **In 2023, we surpassed enrollment goals and connected over 125 new families.**

In 2023 we introduced **About Fresh – Fresh Connect program to Dot Rx** which provides prepaid debit cards to cover the cost of healthy food. In Massachusetts, 12 health care systems and community organizations used Fresh Connect to improve food security for patients and families. Nationally, Fresh Connect distributed 3,885 Fresh Connect cards to newly enrolled cardholders who spent more than \$1.6 million on fresh fruits and vegetables, and added 41 new retailers, totaling 438 retailer locations that accept Fresh Connect debit cards.

- Partnered with **The Trustees** to enable its **Mobile Market program** to provide under-resourced communities with a reliable source of healthy local produce at an affordable price. The Mobile Market carries a wide variety of vegetables locally sourced from Massachusetts farms and makes weekly stops in Boston, Chelsea, and Revere – neighborhoods in which both incomes and supermarket sales are low – indicative of economic and geographic barriers to healthy foods. These same neighborhoods also experience some of the city’s highest levels of diet-related disease, including obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension. The Mobile Market offers weekly orders to subscribers who use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Healthy Incentives Program benefits, with an average of 350 shares distributed per month from mid-June through the end of January. In addition, The Trustees Mobile Market offers home delivery orders to food-insecure households that do not qualify for benefits.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Health is directly linked to the physical environment, and some communities carry a disproportionate environmental burden (e.g., hosting the region’s industrial and transportation hubs) that is associated with health disparities. We partner with organizations that are improving environmental conditions and environmental infrastructure and promoting equitable access to the built and natural environment in the following ways:

- Executed year one of a two-year partnership with the **environmental justice cohort** from our signature Health Justice Partnership and Grant Program. This group of seven not-for-profits across the state work to advance environmental justice and sustainability efforts. Refer to Appendix E for a list of partners. In addition to financial support, we provided pro bono service including:
 - Assessing current diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging policies at the **Rose Kennedy Greenway** and making recommendations to better integrate these principles into their hiring, staffing and community engagement practices.
 - Creating an employee onboarding plan for **Browning the Greenspace**.
 - Developing a logo, key messaging and branding for **Lynn Community Health Center’s** environmental justice initiative.

- Renewed our 7-year commitment as premier sponsor of **BLUEbikes™** public bike share program, a safe, healthy, and accessible alternative mode of transportation for communities throughout Metro Boston and beyond. The BLUEbikes™ program operates in Arlington, Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Newton, Revere, Salem, Somerville and Watertown. In 2023, Blue Cross and Lyft announced the integration of 750 ebikes into the fleet. Adding ebikes advances our equity work by opening up the system to more older adults and people with disabilities. We sponsored numerous free ride days to encourage ridership, including but not limited to Mental Health Month, Pride Month, and during the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority shutdowns.

In 2023, the BLUEbikes™ system logged more than 3.6 million trips and engaged more than 26,000 members. Since we took over as the premier sponsor in 2018, the bike share program has expanded from 1,500 bikes in four municipalities to year-round access to over 5,300 bikes in 13 cities and towns across Eastern Massachusetts.

- Supported key business community partners to develop region-specific priorities addressing climate resilience:
 - **Boston Green Ribbon Commission**, a group of intersectional business leaders brainstorming solutions for Boston's climate resilience. Blue Cross' president and chief executive officer is a member.
 - **One Waterfront Initiative**, a collaboration to advance bold, innovative, and iconic open spaces on Boston's waterfront that support the needs and accessibility of a diverse community and provide solutions to Boston's climate resiliency goals. Blue Cross' president and chief executive officer is a member.
 - **Environmental League of Massachusetts**, supports policy, advocacy and strategic partnerships for a Net Zero Massachusetts.
 - **Climate Beacon Project**, brings together experts and leaders to share ideas across sectors to ideate scalable solutions for a positive climate future.
 - **Ceres**, a not-for-profit advocacy organization accelerating the transition to a cleaner, more just and sustainable economy.
- Promoted equitable access to greenspace by partnering with key municipalities and not-for-profits to provide free programming in easily accessible public spaces for all to enjoy.
 - Executed year two of sole statewide partnership with the **National Fitness Campaign (NFC)** to expand free, equitable access to outdoor exercise in communities across Massachusetts. **In partnership with municipalities, \$1.6M has been invested to launch eight new world-class, digitally activated outdoor Fitness Courts®.** These public, outdoor fitness locations offer accessible exercise opportunities while helping to reduce the health impacts of obesity and loneliness seen across the country. With 13 total NFC sites across the state, 511,147 people have access to a fitness court within a 10-minute bike ride and 39,464 people have access to a fitness court within a 10-minute walk. In 2023 there were **an estimated 125,000 active users** and 31 million calories burned across Massachusetts.
 - **Provided flagship sponsorship for year-round, free outdoor, indoor, and virtual group exercise classes in partnership with not-for-profit organizations in Greater Boston and Worcester**, promoting a sense of neighborhood and connection at parks across the state.
 - **Boston Parks and Recreation Department Park Active Initiative:** A year-long fitness series that offered a variety of free, in-person classes in local parks across the city and virtual workouts for every age and fitness ability. New in 2023, the parks and recreation department hosted a **BLUEbikes™ outdoor, spin class** in the North End

- **Esplanade Association**
 - **Frost Fitness Series:** A five-week series of classes that offered cardio, interval and strength training workouts, and winter walks to get community members moving during the winter months. The 2023 program engaged more than 530 participants in 17 classes, a 13% increase from 2022.
 - **Children in the Park (ChiP) Summer Camp** engaged 400 campers from various Boston neighborhood including Cambridge, South End, Hyde Park, Dorchester and Chinatown for eight-weeks of environmental programming and outdoor play.
 - **The Greenway Fitness Series:** A program that offered free fitness classes across the park every Monday through Thursday and Saturday, with additional classes on select Fridays and Sundays. Offerings included yoga, cardio dance, strength and conditioning circuits, and parkour workouts. The 2023 program engaged 15 partners and 858 participants in 113 offerings.
 - **Worcester’s Office of Health and Human Services and YWCA Summer Fitness in the Parks:** A 12-week series that promoted health and well-being programs across the city, featuring 10 free classes each week at eight city parks in communities of color with the goal of creating a healthier Worcester by providing opportunities to improve emotional health and build social connections. Classes range from boxing, Zumba, meditation and yoga. With support from students at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School, program managers measured program impact and provided recommendations on how to continue to make the program inclusive and representative of Worcester’s diverse communities.
- Led internal **Climate and Humanitarian Disaster Task Force** in response to the increase in frequency and intensity of natural disasters. The task force monitors natural disasters and provides community support as needed, including funding for community partners providing on-the-ground response with the potential for employee contributions, corporate match and/or corporate contributions, in-kind drives for essential items, and volunteer participation from employees. Through our disaster respond efforts, we partner with relief organizations including Americares, Center for Disaster Philanthropy and Global Empowerment Mission, that help communities prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters. In 2023, our humanitarian support also included supporting **relief efforts in Syria and Turkey** following a destructive earthquake and a one-time employee giving and company match to aid groups supporting the **ongoing conflict in the Middle East**.

In addition, we expediate access to care for members affected by flooding or other natural disasters across the United States. In particular, we have over 1.5 million members living in Massachusetts many of whom were affected by severe flooding in Western Massachusetts during July 2023 and from Hurricane Lee in September 2023.

RACIAL JUSTICE

We are committed to acknowledging the community and social context in which individuals live, work, and play and addressing injustices that contribute to disparate health outcomes in communities across the state. We supported innovative not-for-profits working to eliminate systemic, institutional, and interpersonal racism in the following ways:

- Partnered with the **Institute for Healthcare Improvement** to administer year three of \$25 million grant distributed in 2021 to help targeted provider systems incorporate health equity into their clinical interventions provider that address **racial and ethnic inequities in care** throughout the Commonwealth.

- Established the **Equity Action Community (EAC)** to provide opportunities for learning and collaboration, along with the grants. Through the EAC we supported 16 provider groups tackling areas of improvement including data infrastructure, staff trainings, and patient-facing clinical interventions to improve diabetes care, hypertension management, breast and colorectal cancer screening and prevention, and well child visits.
 - Seven provider groups signed on to **Pay for Equity**, an innovative financial payment model rewarding health systems and physicians for eliminating racial and ethnic inequities in care across measures, including cancer screening, hypertension, diabetes care, and child and adolescent visits.
- Amplified and supported **Embrace Boston**, a not-for-profit organization bringing together artists, cultural leaders, researchers and policy experts on multidimensional projects to dismantle structural racism. In 2023, we supported the January Embrace Honors Martin Luther King Jr. event and the June Embrace Ideas festival.
- Supported year four of a four-year one-million-dollar commitment to The **New Commonwealth Racial Equity and Social Justice Fund** and reaffirmed our commitment with another 1-million dollar support for 2024 – 2028. Founded in 2020 by a coalition of 19 prominent Massachusetts Black and Brown business executives, the fund provides essential support, resources, and thought leadership to uncover and dismantle systemic racism across Massachusetts. The fund utilizes trust-based grantmaking and culturally relevant capacity building to foster an ecosystem that supports robust racial equity and social justice outcomes. Areas of focus include identity and culture narrative, youth development, policing and criminal justice reform, health equity, and economic empowerment.
- Partnered with the **Health Equity Compact**, which brings together more than 80 leaders of color from hospitals, health centers, payers, academic institutions and public health – to advance health equity in Massachusetts. The compact leverages its collective voice in two ways: advocating for key policy priorities and principles that should serve as the foundation for health equity as the next chapter in health reform and supporting its members in prioritizing and advancing health equity within their organizations more effectively. Our chief medical officer and senior vice president serves on the board.
- Provided over \$157,000 in support to ensure the sustainability of the **Community Coalition for Equity in Research**, beyond our initial two-year investment (2022–2023). Launched in 2021 with seed funding from Blue Cross, the coalition serves as a source for high-quality community input on research proposals and protocols, as well as a trusted communication channel between researchers and community stakeholders. Comprised of community members who are trained in the basic principles of clinical research, **the coalition provides guidance to clinical researchers on ways to design clinical trials that would increase equity and community interest in participation and address barriers to participation.** This addresses a key need as clinical trials are typically designed and implemented by researchers with limited experience in community-engaged research, as well as limited understanding of the issues associated with research in under-resourced communities.
- Supported **City of Boston and Boston Public Health Commission’s Swim Safe Program** as the lead sponsor with \$100,000 in financial and in-kind support, including producing quality promotional videos and the use of mobile billboard trucks across the city. Swim Safe aims to teach all children in Boston to swim with a focus on families with young children in the neighborhoods of Dorchester, East Boston, Hyde Park, Mattapan and Roxbury, who historically have had less access to safe swimming opportunities.
- Partnered with the **Private Industry Council (PIC)** to provide summer employment to Boston public high school students. This program helps **businesses develop a diverse pipeline of new talent and Boston area students gain access to career opportunities and higher incomes.** In 2023, we supported not-for-profits with funding to build organizational capacity, while offering valuable community and job experience to Boston high school students. In total, **\$200,000 was provided to**

six not-for-profits to employ 80 student interns during the summer: The Base/Boston Astros Baseball Club, Camp Harborview Foundation, Codman Square Health Center, Mothers for Justice and Equality, Save the Harbor / Save the Bay, Thompson Island Outward Bound.

- **The Foundation** engaged in initiatives including:
 - A collaboration with the Health Equity Compact to commission a study of the economic burden of racial and ethnic health disparities to individuals and families, health care providers, employers, public and private sector payers and the overall Massachusetts economy. Findings from [*The Time is Now: The \\$5.9 Billion Case for Massachusetts Health Equity Reform*](#) were presented at the [Health Equity Trends Summit](#) in June 2023.
 - A convening of over 200 Massachusetts health care stakeholders to present and discuss key findings from a report focused on developing a vision and action plan for achieving a racially and ethnically equitable health care delivery system in Massachusetts. Accompanying the report, the Foundation released a “Health Equity Action Plan Toolkit,” which identified a comprehensive set of interventions, policies and programs from around the country that can be deployed by health system leaders and other stakeholders to achieve health equity goals. The findings were discussed by a panel (including Damian Archer, MD, Chief Executive Officer, Outer Cape Health Services, Inc., Nashira Baril, MPH, Executive Director, Neighborhood Birth Center, Matilde (Mattie) Castiel, MD, Commissioner of Health and Human Services, City of Worcester Thea James, MD, MBA, Vice President of Mission, Boston Medical Center Elsie Taveras, MD, MPH, Chief Community Health and Health Equity Officer, Mass General Brigham) and participants.
 - Extended funding for a third year of the **Racial Justice in Health grant program**. Grants went to six grassroots organizations led by people of color to strengthen the groups’ capacity and expertise in health and health care advocacy. The program also provides technical assistance and peer learning for organizations interested in dismantling institutional and structural racism in health and health care delivery. Organizations engage community members, build grassroots power and develop campaigns, strategic partnerships and policy advocacy to improve the health care experience in Massachusetts for communities of color. The program will culminate in meaningful participation in a racial justice in health advocacy or community engagement campaign.
 - Awarded **Special Initiatives Grants** to non-profits seeking to positively impact health or health care access for Massachusetts community members who are economically, socially, culturally or racially marginalized. Some of these included:
 - **Boston Medical Center** will pilot a behavioral health support program, the Race-Based Stress/Trauma and Empowerment group (RBSTE) through the *Recovery from Stress and Trauma through Outpatient Services, Research, and Education Center*. RBSTE utilizes education about racism and wellness and teaches mindfulness and behavioral skills to bolster resistance to race-based stress. The program will be culturally adapted and piloted in faith organizations.
 - **Saheli Inc.** will develop and deliver a cultural competency training program for frontline hospital providers and staff to help them understand the unique cultural characteristics and motivations of South Asian and Arab immigrants, specifically, women, to identify signs of abuse within a cultural context. Saheli will work with hospital partners focusing on the domestic violence units and the staff and providers of the gynecology, primary care, pediatric and maternity units.
 - **University of Massachusetts Amherst Elaine Marieb College of Nursing (EMCON) in partnership with the Bay Area Neighborhood Council (BANC)** will work together to

address racial disparities in maternal health by launching health education services and bringing resources to pregnant people and new mothers in the Bay neighborhood in Springfield. The project will build BANC's capacity to sustain the maternal health program in their community.

- **Vital CxNs** will address the factors that impact health outcomes (e.g., food access, exercise, stress management, housing, etc.) related to elevated rates of diabetes and cardiovascular disease (CVD) by working with Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) communities to redesign diabetes and CVD prevention for their communities. Vital CxNs will strengthen communication between communities, key stakeholders, and clinical partners to develop a roadmap that will center communities' voices and needs in prevention efforts related to CVD and diabetes.

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

Social isolation, economic uncertainty and mounting stress are spurring exponential rises in mental health challenges and substance use disorder. June 2023, data showed annual spending on mental health services for Blue Cross members doubled since the start of the pandemic with mental health and substance use disorders affecting 24% of Blue Cross members.⁷ **The United States surgeon general released a 2023 advisory calling attention to a public health crisis of loneliness, isolation and lack of connection in the U.S., citing the effect on mental, physical and societal health,** and noting a lack of connection can increase the risk for premature death to levels comparable to smoking daily.⁸

Responding to the data and need, we reaffirm our long-standing commitment to mental health and are an innovator at the state and national level. **As a health plan, we provide confidential and convenient support, tools, and services to help our members manage stressors, build resilience and improve emotional well-being.** We also share concerns about the critical nationwide shortage of mental health providers and are acting in a spirit of shared responsibility to address this problem and increase access to mental health services across the state.

The following is a sample of **mental health activities** and programs that we support:

- Expanded our multifaceted approach to address inequities and meet the mental health needs of our members, providers and the broader community through:
 - Integration of clinical care management and advocacy team to connect members with the care they need.
 - Engagement of members, providers and the broader mental health community to integrate medical and mental health care.
 - **Operation of the largest network in Massachusetts with more than 18,000 in-network mental health practitioners,** including child psychiatrists, providers who treat obsessive compulsive disorder, members of the LGBTQIA+ community and those experiencing serious mental illness, trauma and substance use disorders.
 - **Elimination of barriers to prior authorization for outpatient mental health services** and for members seen in the emergency department, who need transfer to inpatient psychiatric or substance use programs.
 - Primary care physicians that receive new financial incentives for integrating mental health care into their practices with the goal of improving physical and mental health outcomes.
- Partnered with the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America in a national collaboration to combat the youth mental health crisis in the United States through trauma-informed approaches to behavioral health care. We have invested a total of \$200,000 to support implementation of the **Boys & Girls Clubs of America Youth Mental Health Initiative** in Massachusetts over the next four years (2023–2026). Across all the Blues Plans, we are collectively investing more than \$10 million over four years to help Boys & Girls Clubs of America implement trauma-informed practices in its more than 5,000 Clubs by 2026 to train over 48,000 staff to better support the emotional and mental well-being of over 3.6 million children.
- Supported the facilitation of two signature **Massachusetts Health Policy Forum** discussions – Roadmap to Health Care Safety in Massachusetts (Spring 2023) and the Youth Mental Health Roadmap for Western Massachusetts (Fall 2023). The conversations brought together community leaders,

⁷ <https://newsroom.bluecrossma.com/2023-06-05-BLUE-CROSS-BLUE-SHIELD-OF-MASSACHUSETTS-SPENDING-ON-MENTAL-HEALTH-SERVICES-DOUBLED-SINCE-START-OF-PANDEMIC>

⁸ <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2023/05/03/new-surgeon-general-advisory-raises-alarm-about-devastating-impact-epidemic-loneliness-isolation-united-states.html>

clinicians and stakeholders to advance equity and access to quality, affordable healthcare. Panelists called to break down silos in care and focus on community-based participatory research. The Foundation president and CEO moderated the discussion on mental health. Our vice president of state and federal government and regulatory affairs serves on the board.

- Executed a year-long partnership with Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce to deliver a six-part **Wellness Reimagined** series to share information and resources with the business community through multiple platforms. Offering expert, timely perspectives, the series explored how business and government can break barriers and stigma to access to mental health care. A session on mental health and wellness in the workplace, held in September, emphasized the importance of holistic support services and listening to voices of Black and Brown employees. Participants were encouraged to “test” the mental health benefits of physical activity with BLUEbikes™ free ride promotions during National Mental Health Month and Mindful Mondays.
- Received the **Brand Innovation Award by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association** for our mental health advocacy program, which aims to improve access to mental health care by broadening our network, adding digital solutions, and providing hands-on navigation for members who need care.
- Announced **full coverage of overdose reversal medication Narcan**, for over the counter, nonprescription use. Starting in 2018, Blue Cross was the first health plan in Massachusetts to provide Narcan toolkits to employer customers and removed copays for Narcan for most of its plans. The company has consistently expanded access to care for members with opioid use disorder, engages employers in the prevention of overdoses, and provides education and other resources that support people with the disorder through treatment and recovery while reducing the stigma associated with opioid use.⁹
- Provided sustained support as a founding member for **RIZE Massachusetts Foundation**, an independent nonprofit foundation dedicated to funding and creating solutions to end the overdose crisis in Massachusetts. Guided by those with lived experience, RIZE builds networks, designs programming and supports community partners that are using novel approaches to preventing overdose and increasing access to treatment. In 2023, RIZE made a 3-year commitment for \$300,00 and awarded approximately \$160,000 to 34 not-for-profits through their Frontline Funds grant program. RIZE programs seek to increase access to services and treatment, address inequity in the delivery of care, reduce stigma associated with substance use disorder, and enhance the social services workforce to best meet the needs of individuals they serve. The company also provides in-kind office space for RIZE professionals.
- **The Foundation** engaged in initiatives including:
 - Published an issue brief on Problem Management Plus (PM+), a cost-effective low-intensity mental health intervention that can be delivered by trained non-clinical workers for people who are experiencing common mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression, or stressful life problems. [Problem Management Plus: An Evidence-Based Approach to Expanding Access to Community-Based Mental Health Supports](#) was designed to define and describe the PM+ intervention and its origins and identify preliminary considerations for implementing it in the United States. The report advances the Foundation’s strategy to test and disseminate models of care that increase access to behavioral health services and expand capacity of the behavioral health workforce.

⁹ <https://newsroom.bluecrossma.com/2023-08-29-BLUE-CROSS-BLUE-SHIELD-OF-MASSACHUSETTS-TO-COVER-OVER-THE-COUNTER-NARCAN-AT-NO-COST-TO-MEMBERS>

- To help broaden the understanding of community-based mental health supports the Foundation hosted a webinar focused on how this evidence-based intervention is now being implemented in the United States. The webinar provided an overview of the key components of PM+ and described lessons learned based on the experience with implementing the intervention in the United States. It featured several guest speakers, including the leaders from three U.S. sites that have recently implemented PM+, and included a brief overview of the Foundation's Advancing Community Driven Mental Health initiative.
- The Foundation invested over \$850,000 in the second year of **Advancing Community-Driven Mental Health**, a multi-year grant program to improve access to community-based mental health services for adults experiencing mild to moderate mental health distress and practical problems of daily living. Grants were awarded to five community-based organizations and two technical assistance partners to continue the adaptation and implementation of Problem Management Plus in diverse settings in different areas of the state.
- Supported efforts to improve access to behavioral health through responsive grantmaking. Six community-based organizations were awarded a total of \$300,000 to pilot and implement programs and strategies to provide behavioral health services and support for specific populations including children and youth, mothers and other caregivers, and new migrants.
 - **Judge Baker Children's Center** and the Morning Star Baptist Church will co-create a community-based, community-leader-led support program called Caregiver Conversations. The pilot program will help address the lack of access to effective mental health care for children and their caregivers living in Boston's Roxbury, Mattapan and Dorchester neighborhoods.
 - **Girls Inc. of the Valley** will advance health and health equity by creating a new mental health program that provides low-barrier, no-cost mental health services to low-income BIPOC youth who participate in Girls Inc. programs. They can reach youth in a trusted setting by embedding new mental health services into their programs.
 - **YWCA Malden** will support Malden High School students to understand their mental health needs and provide them with tools to access appropriate mental health services. The Quest for Life program will also help students to engage with the outside environment to create meaningful experiences or "quests" for themselves and the wider student community.
 - **Neighborhood Village (NV)** seeks to build a multi-layered, centrally coordinated behavioral health support model to meet the acute behavioral health needs in early childhood education settings. NV will pilot and evaluate the onsite delivery of early childhood mental health services, beginning with placing an Early Childhood Mental Health consultant in early childhood classrooms at the East Boston Social Centers.
 - **Cape Cod Children's Place** will develop the Maternal Wellness Support Program, which intends to "Pave a Path to Wellness" for expecting mothers and mothers within the first year of birth. The Cape and Islands Maternal Depression Task Force (CIMDTF) will address the critical need for nonclinical emotional support for new mothers while building the capacity to create a sustainable, evidence-based peer network of trained moms. The project expands upon (1) training expecting parents on the realities and possibilities of new motherhood; (2) training parents to be peer mentors to new and expecting parents; and (3) supporting new parents after birth with free home visiting by a doula.
 - **Worcester Refugee and Immigrant Support and Empowerment (RISE) [Fiscal Sponsor – African Community Education Program]** will provide cross-cultural and

trauma-informed training for behavioral health services and staff of community-based organizations with the specific lens of how to better serve new migrant arrivals to area service providers. Specifically, Worcester RISE will develop a model for mental health training of frontline workers to scale up the local capacity to build a network of trauma-informed and culturally sensitive behavioral health providers in Worcester to increase access to culturally sensitive services.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Many people face barriers that prevent or limit access to needed health care, which increases the risk of poor health outcomes and health inequities. These barriers include, but are not limited to, a lack of availability of health care, transportation to care, culturally and linguistically appropriate care, and health insurance coverage.

The following is a sample of the health care access activities and programs that we support:

- Invested more than \$386,000 in 13 **community health centers** to help further their efforts to provide quality, affordable health care to diverse and under-resourced communities. Community health centers provide primary, preventive, and dental care, as well as mental health, substance use disorder and other community-based services to anyone in need, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. In Massachusetts, 52 community health center organizations provide high-quality health care to more than one million state residents at more than 300 sites statewide.
- Provided grants totaling \$150,000 to **Health Care for All**, a not-for-profit organization that seeks to make quality, affordable health care accessible to everyone, regardless of income, social or economic status. The funding was used to support the organization's initiatives, including:
 - Ensure maximum enrollment in MassHealth Redetermination Campaign to help individuals and families transition to or maintain health coverage.
 - Reduce cost, improve quality and transparency, and preserve public program eligibility, benefits, and affordability for all consumers.
 - Advance and monitor updates to the Massachusetts health care payment and delivery system.
 - Educate, empower, and equip health care consumers to participate in health reform dialogues alongside insurers, health care providers and health coverage purchasers.
 - Sustain operating support for the 950 enrollment assisters staffing the Health Care for All HelpLine, which handled 19,786 calls in five languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, and French), and helped process 1,595 benefit applications for 3,036 people.
 - Provide real-time feedback to policymakers and help decisionmakers obtain the information they need to institute strategic program, technology, and infrastructure improvements in areas such as mental and oral health care.
- Supported key business community partners, such as **Associated Industries of Massachusetts**, **Massachusetts Business Roundtable**, **Boston Municipal Research Bureau**, **Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce** and **Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation** to develop both region-specific and statewide policy priorities to protect Massachusetts employers in the provision of affordable health care coverage to their employees, as they seek to balance quality, access and affordability for the Commonwealth's workforce. Blue Cross partners with organizations representing a wide range of employers to ensure business community voices of all sizes and types are heard in the health care debate. With the heightened urgency brought about by the health care workforce crisis, we are working closely with these organizations to develop collaborative and innovative partnerships and strategies to address this critical issue.
 - Partnered with **Associated Industries of Massachusetts** to advance its efforts to manage the cost of and increase access to health care. Blue Cross is a key advisor as the organization focuses on containing health care costs by addressing the excessive market power held by certain large providers; giving consumers better information with which to make health care decisions; and preventing new health care mandates that lack commensurate value. Our vice president of state and federal government and regulatory affairs serves on the board.

- Provided support and expertise to **the Massachusetts Business Roundtable's** cross-segment task forces, specifically in the areas of:
 - **Health care and life sciences:** Worked towards a health care system that ensures access to quality health care, increases equity, and promotes access to digital care.
 - **Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI):** Fostered authentic conversations among participating business leaders, developed DEI awareness, and created an action plan to guide DEI engagement.
 - **Energy and environment:** Supported efforts to provide reliable, sustainable, and affordable energy resources for consumers and businesses, enabling the state to meet the needs of a growing economy, while addressing climate change in a way that also supports environmental justice issues.

Our president and CEO serves on the board and our vice president of state and federal government and regulatory affairs represents the company.

- Supported the **Boston Municipal Research Bureau**, which provides expert research, independent analysis, and trusted findings on Boston's most critical fiscal and policy matters. Research and recommendations, including those related to health care, lead to sound policies, new laws and important city management improvements. Our vice president of citizenship and public affairs serves on board of directors.
- Provided leadership to the **Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce Health Care and Life Sciences Leadership Council**, which works with business and government leaders to engage in efforts to find health care cost solutions and preserve the region's leadership roles in the areas of care quality, research, and innovation. Nearly one-in-five workers in Massachusetts are employed directly in the health care sector and tens of thousands more are indirectly employed in jobs that provide legal, financial, technological, administrative, and other support. Our vice president of state and federal government and regulatory affairs serves as chair of the council.
- Continued to be a principal founder and primary funder of the **Massachusetts Coalition on Serious Illness Care** activities, including funding the positions for the executive director, deputy director, and other support staff, and providing significant in-kind communications, management and convening resources. The coalition is led by an advisory board that includes Andrew Dreyfus, former president and chief executive officer of Blue Cross; Maureen Bisognano, former president and chief executive officer of the Institute for Health Care Improvement; and Michael Curry, president and chief executive officer of the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers. **The coalition consists of more than 125 Massachusetts organizations that are working to ensure that everybody gets the care that matters to them throughout their lives, especially if they are seriously ill.** Major activities included:
 - **Disseminated research findings** exploring the health care experiences of people with serious illness and their caregivers, especially in communities of color, through presentations, speaking engagements and academic publications.
 - **Hosted four free, in-person convenings across the state** for the serious illness care community, and several additional webinars for the public.
 - Launched a series of virtual **Serious Illness Care Education Forums** to bring faculty members from across Massachusetts together to learn about new developments in serious illness care undergraduate medical education and to catalyze collaboration across institutions.
 - Introduced the **Massachusetts Patient and Community Review Board**, a thoughtful space for patients and community members to share their insights and experiences with health care researchers and program developers as they start new initiatives.
 - Led an advisory group for the statewide infrastructure for digital capture, storage, and retrieval of advance care planning documents in partnership with the Department of Public Health and Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Blue Cross provided significant financial support for this initiative and helped the state secure matching funding for the new registry from the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services.

- The Foundation engaged in initiatives including:
 - Publication of **Closing the Coverage Gaps: Reducing Health Insurance Disparities in Massachusetts**, a report describing the people in Massachusetts without health insurance and the barriers to coverage they face, including affordability, administrative complexity and immigration, language and cultural barriers. The report also proposed a menu of policy options that address the specific circumstances in Massachusetts. The proposed options are meant to inform a statewide conversation about the best approaches to closing the remaining coverage gaps in Massachusetts and removing structural barriers that result in racial and ethnic disparities in health insurance coverage. Educational materials accompanying the report included two infographics and a [three-minute video](#) entitled [Behind the Data: Voices of the Uninsured](#), featuring four Massachusetts residents who describe their experiences without health insurance.
 - Produced five publications through the Foundation’s *Massachusetts Medicaid Policy Institute*, which aims to promote the development of effective Medicaid policy solutions through research and policy analysis and create a rigorous and thoughtful public discussion of the program’s successes and the challenges ahead. The Foundation’s 2023 publications broaden understanding of the state’s Medicaid program, educate stakeholders on the impact of federal policies on MassHealth, and monitor reforms and upcoming changes:
 - **MassHealth Matters to Massachusetts – Infographic:** highlighted key facts about MassHealth, including the many ways in which the program contributes to the Massachusetts economy and promotes health care coverage and access for residents in the state.
 - **Reducing Coverage Loss: A 2023 Update on the End of the Federal Continuous Coverage Requirement in MassHealth:** an issue brief aiming to educate stakeholders and policymakers about a federal policy change that impacted coverage for many MassHealth members.
 - **The MassHealth Demonstration Extension 2022–2027: Building on Success, Focusing on Equity:** described the approved MassHealth Demonstration extension, what it means for MassHealth coverage moving forward, and implications for members, providers, and Massachusetts. Massachusetts administers much of MassHealth through a 1115 Demonstration waiver, approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), which it has extended several times since it was originally approved in 1995. On September 28, 2022, CMS approved Massachusetts’ request for a five-year extension of its Demonstration, which is in effect from October 1, 2022 through December 31, 2027.
 - **Mass Health: The Basics – Facts and Trends (October 2023):** provided new data on MassHealth enrollment and spending from the most recent state fiscal years available. The chart pack features a high-level overview of the delivery systems that serve MassHealth members. It also highlights MassHealth’s latest reform efforts, which include initiatives to advance health equity and to improve timely access to behavioral health care.
 - **What to Know Now About MassHealth ACOs:** As of June 2023, over 1.3 million members are enrolled in 1 of 17 MassHealth ACOs. This report was developed as a resource for stakeholders to help explain the key elements of MassHealth ACOs, including the two types, who they serve, and the services they provide.

- Awarded **Special Initiatives Grants** to fund projects to empower communities to advance health equity at the community level. If successful, it is hoped that these projects can be sustained, scaled, and potentially, replicated. Examples of the Special Initiative grants focused on access to care include:
 - **Northeast Arc** will provide telehealth services and expertise to increase health care access and improve outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The telehealth provider, StationMD, will address health care symptoms early to reduce emergency room visits and divert patients from hospitals and primary care practices that are currently overburdened.
 - **Immigrants' Assistance Center** will work with unaccompanied and undocumented youth in elementary and middle school and their families and/or guardians to increase access to health care and regular health check-ups, including vaccinations. It will educate children and their families and/or guardians about the best ways to meet their health needs. It will also educate them about the importance of preventive care and the dangers of not addressing health issues promptly.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING – VOLUNTEERISM – CLIMATE AND HEALTH RESILIENCE

In addition to the community-focused programmatic work detailed previously, **diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging**; **employee volunteerism**; and **climate and health resilience** serve as internal levers to build a healthy and just community for all.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

We know diverse businesses help create vibrant, thriving communities. We implemented programs and initiatives that make our workplace and business practices more diverse, equitable and inclusive, including:

- Advanced our **Supplier Diversity Program**, a program for businesses owned by minorities, women, veterans, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities that focuses on procurement, engagement activities and supplier development trainings. Invested \$58 million with diverse businesses, a 30% increase over 2022. This program offers various trainings and seminars, including a 2023 webinar, “How to Do Business with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts,” that engaged more than 40 businesses. Blue Cross’ Supplier Diversity Program has received multiple awards, including the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce Pacesetters Company of the Year and the Center for Women and Enterprise Partner of the Year.
- Launched the 2023 cohort of **Health Equity Business Accelerator program**, which provides financial, strategic and mentorship support to equity-focused health care startups led by underrepresented entrepreneurs. According to Crunchbase, less than 3% of venture capital funding goes to companies with Black or Latinx founders. The [2023 program](#) supported Health Haven Rx, Mitivate, Nutribile, Reveles and ViuHealth, each received a \$150,000 investment and nine months of tailored programming to help accelerate growth and foster innovation. These leaders reflect a diverse array of lived experiences and professional expertise, including in chronic autoimmune disease management, the pharmaceutical industry, and clinical trials.
- Provided a **Spanish-language version of [Coverage](#)** generating a 250% increase in readership to advance language accessibility across new audiences including members, employers, providers, and community partners. *Coverage*, Blue Cross’ first-in-market health news service, features original health news reporting and photojournalism on issues of critical interest to consumers, employers, community leaders and policymakers.
- Uplifted 10 inclusive and diverse **Employee Resource Groups** that represent more than 40% of employees and are employee-driven and sponsored by executive leadership:

Asian Blue Community	Empowering Abilities
AZULatinx	Vets
Black Professionals Network	Women’s Inclusion Network
Blue Pride	Women In Tech
Chronic Conditions and Caregivers	Working Parents Network

They advance our diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging strategy through the “Five C’s” model: care, culture, career, community, and commerce. The groups create awareness and promotion of internal mobility efforts, participate in volunteer opportunities, and contribute to benefits policies and business ideas.

- Re-focused our well-being strategy to include being a **menopause friendly workplace**, supporting working women at work, home and in their communities navigate the wide array of menopause symptoms and decrease stigma.

- **Invested more than \$78,000 in 12 not-for-profits supporting people with disabilities** and engaged in community efforts to promote and evolve disability awareness, acceptance, and inclusion programs. To drive innovation, productivity, and growth in today's economy, institutions must design workplaces and community spaces where every individual can participate fully and meaningfully, including people with disabilities. Research reveals that companies who embrace best practices for employing and supporting people with disabilities outperform their peers in the marketplace. Key activities include:
 - Our director of contract operations and president of the Empowering Abilities employee resource group serves on the following commissions: **Massachusetts Future of Work Commission, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination Advisory Board, and Disability Rights Advisory Committee.**
 - Named one of the **Best Places to Work for Disability Inclusion** for continuous efforts to create a safe and inclusive workplace for employees of all abilities.
 - For the fourth consecutive year, received a perfect score on the annual **Disability Equality Index**, which measures culture and leadership, enterprise-wide access, employment practices, community engagement, and supplier diversity.
 - Participated in the Massachusetts Attorney General's **Disability Rights Advisory Committee.**

VOLUNTEERISM

Our employees are our greatest asset. We are proud to offer a wide range of volunteer programs that enable employees to contribute their skills, resources, and passion to the community. **In 2023, participation in BlueCrew, our corporate volunteering program, reached an all-time high of 88% (up 6% from 2022).**

We integrated our corporate citizenship work into company culture and values by promoting a pathway to volunteering for every employee through the following signature initiatives:

- **BlueCrew Events** build community and connection among employees, reinforce the culture of service, and provide valuable support for not-for-profit partners. In 2023, employees participated in **329 pro bono and year-round service projects in support of 153 partners, contributing more than \$1.95 million.** In partnership with **employee resource groups**, we offered service events that align with each group's respective affinity month. For example, members from the Women Inclusion Network supported Dignity Matters and the Black Professionals Network supported Father Bill's Place
- **13th Annual Service Day** engages nearly **3,000 employee volunteers to support 57 health justice service projects on cross-functional teams promoting civic engagement, collaboration and stewardship.** Projects included building-based, virtual and community-based projects across the state including packing personal care kits and writing letters of encouragement to active military members in Weymouth, harvesting produce for a food pantry in Cohasset, repairing a Veteran's home in Chicopee, beach clean-up in Boston and more. Since Service Day's inception in 2011, we have contributed more than \$11 million to the community through this annual volunteer day. Refer to Appendix F for a full list of Service Day partners.
- **BlueBeginnings Orientation** introduces all new employees to our corporate citizenship work and culture of service through a 30-minute, in-home, virtual volunteer experience with the Happy Hope Factory, a not-for-profit that brings happiness to hospitalized children with special needs or chronic and life-threatening illnesses by providing Happy Hope Bags filled with hours of activities to help to support the child's well-being.
- **Skills-based volunteering** provides pro bono support to a network of Health Justice partners. During spring and fall skills-based sessions, 31 employees engaged in tailored pro bono service projects that

resulted in a sustainable impact for the following partners: Browning the Greenspace, Lynn Community Health Center, Rose Kennedy Greenway, GreenRoots and Speak for the Trees as detailed in the environmental justice section.

- **Not-for-profit board program** reflects the importance of civic leadership at the highest levels of the company. In 2023, 55 senior leaders served on 84 not-for-profit boards, an estimate pro-bono value of \$954,180, contributing their knowledge and expertise, galvanizing external stakeholders, driving fundraising, and helping to build networks.
- **GenUnity**, a not-for-profit focused on building the next generation of community leaders, offers a unique immersive, three-month civic leadership program focused on health equity. This program brought together community members with lived experience, not-for-profit staff, and business professionals, including five of our employees, to foster solidarity and address the systemic inequities that create barriers to health for people of color and marginalized communities. In honor of our former president and CEO's commitment to community engagement and diversity, equity, and inclusion, we also partnered with GenUnity to launch the Andrew Dreyfus Community Fellowship, a leadership accelerator that will foster the growth and impact of GenUnity's program graduates. With our funding, the fellowship provides graduates, including participating employees, with access to additional seed funding, community-building events, and direct connections to a pipeline of community and civic leaders to help implement their plans to drive lasting change in communities across greater Boston.
- **BlueCrew Bucks program** is an incentive program that recognizes and celebrates employees who volunteer outside of the annual Service Day by rewarding employees with \$25 per volunteer hour served (up to \$500 each year) to donate to the not-for-profit(s) of their choice. 2023 marked our first full year of BlueCrew Bucks. Employees contributed over \$140,000 to nearly 500 not-for-profits.
- **YouGiveBlue campaign** gives our employees the chance to double their impact through a company match. In 2023, employees raised \$767,000 for U.S.-based not-for-profits, exceeding the previous year's results for the sixth year in a row. With the company match, the total community contribution reached more than \$1.5 million.
- **Donation drives** help support community partners and the clients they serve during the holidays. In 2023, employees donated over 1,000 items including toys and gifts sent to the Wonderfund in support of 150 children in foster care and hats and gloves for unhoused community members were contributed to the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program.

CLIMATE AND HEALTH RESILIENCE

As the state's largest private health plan, we recognize our role as environmental stewards and are committed to improving the health of our members, employees, and community. **In 2023, we executed year one of our refreshed climate action and environmental health strategy to be carbon neutral and zero waste by 2030.** This includes implementing a new sustainability management platform and employee engagement program to promote environmental stewardship.

To monitor our progress towards our 2030 goals we:

- **Established one of the first Carbon Footprint Governance Councils**, a group of internal leaders and stakeholders, which will guide improvements in operations and work with civic and not-for-profit leaders to accelerate environmental justice and resilience capacity building throughout Massachusetts.
- For the first time since the inception of our sustainability program, we have the resources and technical support to develop our company's first baseline assessment of our carbon footprint as well as regularly track our Scope 1 and 2 emissions. In 2023, we **reduced our scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions from 6,413 to 6,001 CO₂e metric tons.**

Key programs and initiatives include:

- Provided **\$350,000 to 30 not-for-profits to support winter assistance programs and bolster local safety nets for Massachusetts** communities during the 2023-2024 winter season. Organizations include regional food banks, shelters, YMCAs and other groups that can deliver essential needs and services to their community members directly and quickly. The unrestricted grants may be used for groceries, winter clothing, hygiene and household items, heating assistance, and other services. See Appendix G for list of organizations.
- Awarded inaugural winner of **SustainableIT's Impact award** for our commitment to reducing our high-carbon mainframe footprint.
- Engaged employees in leading sustainability and environmental health projects:
 - Produced more than 1,000 pounds of local, organic produce through an innovative partnership with **The Trustees and company gardens at our Hingham office**. Gardeners rallied to respond to the high rate of food insecurity in communities by donating their harvest to the Weymouth Food Pantry and Interfaith Social Services. To engage the remote workforce, we hosted virtual gardening workshops about sustainable gardening skills, such as trellising, container gardening, and home composting that employees could apply in their own home gardens.
 - Developed new climate and health resilience education programming modules– **Good Stewards** – on the connections between sustainability practices, climate resilience and personal health. Topics include a better understanding of how to increase energy efficiency, preparing for different climate related challenges, and building resilience in communities.

CLOSING

At Blue Cross, we care deeply about doing our part to create an equitable, just, and healthy Commonwealth. This commitment inspires our employees, supports the communities where our members live and work, and is true to our founding nearly 90 years ago. We are grateful for our community partners for their ongoing guidance and collaboration, and to the Attorney General's Office for this opportunity to share the highlights of our work in 2023.

NEXT REPORTING YEAR

We expect the 2024 Community Benefits Annual Report to continue to focus on chronic disease, mental health/substance use disorder, and access to health care while addressing specific health justice factors that influence health outcomes. As noted above, we will update our CHNA and CHIP research to align our strategy with current, data-driven, public health research. We expect investments in the community will align with previous years.

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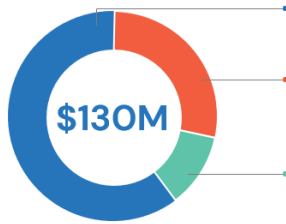
APPENDIX

APPENDIX A – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

BE COMMUNITY FOCUSED. ALWAYS

We are a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. Our mission is to show up for everyone like they're the only one, guiding them to the exceptional health care they deserve – affordably, equitably and seamlessly. In keeping with that commitment, our company is consistently recognized as best-in-class for leading and serving in the community.

COMMUNITY COMMITMENT: A 10-YEAR SNAPSHOT



\$71M
in corporate contributions to 400+ not-for-profits annually

\$37M
in BCBSMA Foundation grants to 80+ community organizations annually

\$23M
in volunteer service and in-kind support

We invest 0.13% of our annual revenue – close to the national average of 0.14%.

- 3,300+**
Annual employee volunteers (85%+ of employees – compared to the national corporate volunteer rate of 17%)
- 300+**
Annual service projects
- 20,000+**
Annual volunteer hours

RECOGNIZED AS A LEADER



Civic 50
Points of Light Foundation
5 years in a row



Top Charitable Contributor in MA
Boston Business Journal
17 years in a row in top 10

APPENDIX B – COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CHNA) AND SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH (SDOH)

Hospital or Associated Entity and Report Title	Year	Area Served	Priority Needs and Populations Identified	Associated CHIP and Priority Areas Identified
Massachusetts Department of Public Health Massachusetts State Health Assessment	2017	Massachusetts	Priority Needs: Maternal, Infant, and Child Health; Environmental Health; Infectious Disease; Injury and Violence Prevention; Addiction; Health Systems and Health Care Access; Wellness and Chronic Disease Priority Population: Elderly, youth, poor and immigrant communities	Not in 2017; most recent from 2014 Active Living, Healthy Eating, and Tobacco-Free Living; Chronic Disease Prevention and Control; Infectious Disease Prevention and Control; Substance Abuse Prevention, Intervention, Treatment and Recovery; Injury, Suicide, and Violence Prevention; Maternal, Child, and Family Health Promotion; Environmental Risk Factors and Health
Boston CHNA-CHIP Collaborative Boston CHNA-CHIP Collaborative 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment	2019	Boston	Priority Needs: Employment and Workforce; Education; Food Insecurity; Housing; Transportation; Chronic Disease; Mental Health; Substance Use; Violence and Trauma; Maternal and Child Health; Environmental Health; Health Care Access Priority Population: n/a	In process Housing; Access to Services: Financial Security and Mobility; Behavioral Health
Lawrence General Hospital Lawrence General Hospital 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment	2019	Andover, Lawrence, Methuen, North Andover, Boxford, Georgetown, Haverhill, Middleton	Priority Needs: Chronic Disease; Aging Population; Behavioral Health; Health Care Access Priority Population: Youth, homeless, immigrant communities	None found
Lowell General Hospital Greater Lowell Community Health Needs Assessment	2019	Lowell, Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, Westford	Priority Needs: Behavioral Health; Cancer; Chronic Disease Priority Population: n/a	2020 in process; most recent from 2017 Access to Healthy Food; Asthma; Mental Health; Physical Activity; Social Determinants of Health; Substance Use and Prevention
Cape Cod Healthcare Cape Cod Healthcare Community Health Needs Assessment Report and Implementation Plan 2020-2022	2020	Barnstable County	Priority Needs: Housing; Transportation; Seasonal Economy and Employment Variation; Behavioral Health; Aging Population; Physical Health Conditions; Health Care Access Priority Population: Seniors and youth	Yes (same report) Physical Health Conditions; Behavioral Health; Transportation; Housing; Workforce Development
Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital- Plymouth Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital- Plymouth Community Health Needs Assessment	2019	Plymouth, Duxbury, Kingston, Carver	Priority Needs: Mental Health and Substance Use; Chronic/Complex Conditions and their Risk Factors; Social Determinants of Health and Access to Care Priority Population: Youth and families; Older adults; Low-to-Moderate Income Individuals and Families; Individuals with Chronic/Complex Conditions	Yes (included as appendix of report) Same as CHNA
Martha's Vineyard Hospital FY2019 Community Health Needs Assessment	2019	Martha's Vineyard	Priority Needs: Quality and Affordable Housing; Access to Care and Coordination of Services; Behavioral Health; Aging-Related Services Priority Population: n/a	In process

Hospital or Associated Entity and Report Title	Year	Area Served	Priority Needs and Populations Identified	Associated CHIP and Priority Areas Identified
Baystate Medical Center 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment	2019	Hampden County	Priority Needs: Social environment; Housing needs; Access to transportation, healthy food and places to exercise; Lack of resources to meet basic needs; Educational attainment; Violence; Environmental exposures; Insurance and health care related challenges; Limited availability of providers; Need for culturally sensitive care; Lack of transportation; Lack of care coordination; Health literacy, language barriers; Mental Health and substance use disorders; Chronic health conditions; Physical activity and nutrition; Infant and perinatal health; Sexual health; Alzheimer's disease Priority Population: Children and youth; older adults; Latinos; Blacks; LGBTQ+	None found
Baystate Franklin Medical Center 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment	2019	Franklin County	Priority Needs: Social environment; Housing needs; Access to transportation, healthy food and places to exercise, and broadband; Lack of resources to meet basic needs; Educational attainment; Violence and trauma; Limited availability of providers; Lack of care coordination; Insurance and health care related challenges; Need for increased cultural humility; Need for transportation; Health literacy and language barriers; Mental health and substance use disorders; Chronic health conditions; Infant and perinatal health Priority Population: Residents with incomes below 300% of federal poverty level; Black and Latino residents; LGBTQ+ Youth; People re-entering community after incarceration; Transgender, non-binary, or gender nonconforming people; children who have experienced trauma; older adults	None found
Berkshire Health Systems Berkshire County Community Health Needs Assessment	2018	Berkshire County	Priority Needs: Clinical Care; Health Behaviors; Morbidity and Mortality; Physical Environment; Social Economic Priority Population: n/a	None found
City of Worcester Division of Public Health; Fallon Health; UMass Memorial Medical Center 2018 Greater Worcester Regional Community Health Assessment	2018	Grafton, Holden, Leicester, Millbury, Shrewsbury, West Boylston, and Worcester	Priority Needs: Mental Health; Substance Use; Social Determinants of Health; Chronic/complex Conditions and their Risk Factors Priority Population: Vulnerable children and families; youth and adolescents; immigrants and non-English speakers; racial/ethnic minorities & others facing discrimination; homeless and unstably housed; older adults	2016 Racism & Discrimination; Substance Use; Access to Care; Mental Health; Economic Opportunity; Cultural Responsiveness; Access to Healthy Food; Physical Activity; Safety

Massachusetts Health Council *2017 Preventable Conditions and Social Determinants of Health*: Access to and consumption of nutritious foods are important determinants of health. While Massachusetts fares better than the rest of the country, a sizable portion of the state's population experiences food insecurity. The level of food insecurity varies by region. There are also disparities in the consumption of healthy foods, across racial and ethnic groups, education levels, and gender. About three-quarters of a million people in Massachusetts were

food-insecure in 2014. Suffolk (15.9%), Bristol (12.1%), and Hampden (11.7%) counties reported food insecurity rates higher than the statewide rate of 11.1%.

Children's HealthWatch and The Greater Boston Food Bank *Massachusetts Cost of Hunger*: Food insecurity costs the state of Massachusetts at least \$2.4 billion dollars per year. Despite nearly nine years of economic recovery, 1 out of every 10 households in Massachusetts still lacks the resources necessary to afford enough food for all household members to live active, healthy lives. In 2016, \$2.4 billion was spent in health care, special education, and lost work time costs connected to food insecurity. Of the \$2.4 billion, about \$1.9 billion were direct and indirect health-related costs, and special education accounted for \$520 million in expenditures.

Commonwealth Magazine *Gateway Cities Discover the Power of Food*: Over a 12-month period, more than \$4 million in incentives were paid through the Massachusetts Healthy Incentive Program, known as HIP, which reimburses SNAP recipients for the amount they spend at farmers markets, from \$40 to \$80 a month depending on family size. Attendance at farmers markets surged in response to the funding, which also provided a major boom to growers.

U.S. Department of Agriculture: 40 million Americans live in households that don't always have enough food for everyone in the family. Working-age adults who often go without enough food are at least 40% more likely to suffer from long-term health problems.

The Boston Public Health Commission *2016-2017 Health of Boston*: Personal health behaviors contribute to a person's risk for disease and to one's overall quality of life and well-being. Behaviors such as smoking, excessive alcohol use, and intake of excess calories including sugar-sweetened beverages, contribute to cancers, obesity, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, and premature death. Conversely, physical activity and fruit and vegetable intake are protective against each one of those poor health outcomes.

The United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley *2017 Community Survey*: The number one unmet need facing the state of Massachusetts is affordable housing with drugs and substance use disorder coming in second, followed closely by access to physical and mental health care. Key findings also indicate that 41% of respondents worry about the ability for families to survive despite the high cost of living.

The Foundation *Leveraging the Social Determinants of Health: What Works?*: Greater attention to the social determinants of health may both improve Americans' health and reduce health care costs. Research suggests that of the factors that determine one's health, 20% is attributed to genetics, 20% is attributed to health care, and 60% is attributed to social, environmental and behavioral factors. Increased investment in partnerships between health care and social services can offer health benefits and reduce health care costs for targeted populations.

Blue Cross Blue Shield *Health Index*: The index identifies health conditions with the greatest impact and how the level of health impact of these conditions is influenced by social determinants of health such as socioeconomic conditions, level of education, community health behaviors and local health system characteristics. Additionally, the index provides county-level health indicators and allows for the objective measurement of specific health conditions that drive overall health in each county. The top ten most impactful conditions on the population health of Massachusetts are major depression, hypertension, high cholesterol, coronary artery disease, alcohol use disorder, psychotic disorder, substance use disorder, type II diabetes, Crohn's disease, and hyperactivity related conditions.

Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity *Grantmaking with a Social Justice Lens*: The daily practice of using a racial equity lens in social change as well as in grantmaking has established a baseline understanding of structural racism, and it has also produced new insights, definitions, mistakes, and nuances.

Blue Cross Blue Shield Association's *Understanding Health Conditions Across the U.S.*: Moody's Analytics used data collected through the aforementioned Blue Cross Blue Shield Health Index, to compile a report that identified health conditions and how they are influenced by social determinants of health. Physical health conditions, mental health conditions and unique health conditions are crucial for understanding variations in

community health and assessing which conditions, are likely to contribute to poor health. Physical health conditions (high cholesterol, coronary artery disease, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and diabetes) are strongly associated with overall health and have a larger adverse effect on population health in places with socioeconomic, demographic, and behavioral challenges. In contrast, mental health conditions (hyperactivity and depression/ anxiety/affective disorder) are more likely to have large effects in counties that have fewer socioeconomic, demographic and behavioral challenges. Finally, unique conditions (breast cancer, lung cancer, and substance abuse disorder) do not fit into either of these categories as a result of the unique ways they influence health.

Office of the Attorney General *Building Toward Racial Justice and Equity in Health: A Call to Action*: the data on racial and ethnic health care disparities in Massachusetts paint a bleak picture. In general, residents of color are less healthy and die younger than white residents. These disparities are long-standing and pervasive. While gaps between white populations and communities of color have been narrowed, there are still significant racial disparities in health outcomes in communities across the state. COVID-19 has amplified and worsened these inequities. The evidence on the disparate effects of COVID-19 provides a somber reminder of the health care system's failure to equitably serve the Commonwealth's most under-resourced residents.

Massachusetts Health Council *Common Health for the Commonwealth: Report on Social Determinants of Health, Selected Health Conditions and Injuries and Risk and Protective Factors 2021*. Massachusetts is one of the healthiest states in the nation. Five major killers lost potency in Massachusetts in the decade from 2007 to 2017 – cancer, heart disease, stroke, Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), and motor vehicle collisions. And yet, overall indicators of health tell a different story about the direction in which Massachusetts is heading. Life expectancy typically increases over time, but it fell three times during that decade in Massachusetts. So-called deaths of despair – deaths due to overdose, alcohol, and suicide – share a large portion of blame. During the decade, opioid overdose deaths rose 210 percent; alcohol-induced deaths rose 35 percent; and death by suicide rose 23 percent. The age-adjusted mortality rate for opioid overdose now exceeds that for stroke.

APPENDIX C – HEALTH JUSTICE STRATEGY

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Accelerating advances in health justice through a dual track program. All participants in the Accelerator receive funding, training + facilitation, pro bono support + networking opportunities.

- **TRACK 1: The Collaborative**
 - Multi-year funding, training, facilitation and pro bono support to jump-start a new idea or scale an existing model
 - Multiple (typically up to 5) organizations are invited to convene around a promising idea or model in a specific community
- **TRACK 2: The Network + Grants**
 - Multi-year funding, training, and pro bono support
 - Individual organizations apply for operating support



INVESTMENTS, ENGAGEMENT + ACTIVISM

Leveraging our financial investments and volunteer resources to support organizations that are focused on health justice.

- Volunteer support from our employees including Service Day, Skills-Based Volunteering and BlueCrew projects
- Investments to not-for-profits to support health justice programming
- Strategic collaborations in towns across the state focused on addressing unique community health challenges
- Internal sustainability and wellness efforts

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP & CONVENINGS

Driving change by convening stake-holders and sharing insights and promising practices around health justice innovation

- Convenings in communities across MA on important health topics
- Advocacy work supporting health advancements

CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMMING

CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY
INVESTMENTS

PUBLIC
AFFAIRS

CLIMATE + HEALTH
RESILIENCE

APPENDIX D – THE FOUNDATION

Established in 2001 with an initial endowment from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (Blue Cross), the mission of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation (the Foundation) is to ensure equitable access to health care for all those in the Commonwealth who are economically, racially, culturally, or socially marginalized. The Foundation, led by its President & CEO and separately governed by its own board of directors, supports the expansion of health care access through research, policy work, learning communities and grants to community organizations. Since it was established, the Foundation has invested more than \$77 million in grants to the community. Its publications serve as vital resources for policymakers and health care organizations across the state and country, and it regularly convenes leaders for information dissemination and impartial and thoughtful public discussion. Since 2020, the key focus areas of the Foundation have been promoting access to coverage and care, expanding access to behavioral health services and addressing structural racism and racial inequities in health.

<p>ADVANCING COMMUNITY-DRIVEN MENTAL HEALTH \$1,020,161</p> <p>Provides three-year grants to improve access to community-based mental health services for adults experiencing mild to moderate mental health distress and practical problems of daily living.</p>	<p>STRENGTHENING THE VOICE FOR ACCESS \$743,886</p> <p>Provides two-year general operating grants to Massachusetts organizations to strengthen community-based policy activities, increase citizen participation in public policy development and promote collaboration among statewide policy and advocacy organizations on two key priorities for marginalized populations: ensuring health care coverage and addressing health care affordability.</p>	<p>SUPPORTING HEALTH COVERAGE ENROLLMENT EFFORTS \$600,000</p> <p>Provides two-year grants to Massachusetts community-based organizations to expand Certified Application Counselor (CAC) capacity to support MassHealth members who will need to re-determine their health coverage as the state unwinds the pandemic-era continuous coverage requirements and to assist those who are uninsured secure health insurance coverage.</p>	<p>RACIAL JUSTICE IN HEALTH \$433,500</p> <p>Provides three years of funding for people of color-led, grassroots organizations to strengthen their capacity and expertise in health and health care advocacy.</p>
<p>POLICY & RESEARCH \$40,000</p> <p>Provides awards to projects that align with the Foundation's strategic focus areas in support of its the policy and research agenda.</p>	<p>SPECIAL INITIATIVES \$600,000</p> <p>Provides one-year grants for projects which empower communities to advance health equity at the community level. Projects should positively impact the health or health care related needs of MA residents who have been economically, socially, culturally, or racially marginalized. Activities align with at least one of the Foundation's strategic priorities.</p>	<p>CATALYST FUND \$212,042</p> <p>Provides one-year, non-renewable grants to help community-based organizations strengthen their capacity to expand access to health and health care in Massachusetts.</p>	

APPENDIX E – HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP AND GRANT PROGRAM

Environmental Justice Partners (2022 – 2023 cohort)

[ACE \(Alternatives for Community and Environment\)](#)

Empowering communities of color and low-income communities across Massachusetts to eradicate environmental racism and classism, create healthy, sustainable communities and achieve environmental justice.

[Browning the Green Space](#)

Facilitating a just energy transition for Black and Brown people in the Massachusetts clean energy sector and beyond by creating jobs, building wealth, and reducing energy burden in communities of color.

[GreenRoots](#)

Enhancing the urban environment and public health in Chelsea and East Boston through collective action, unity, education and youth leadership across neighborhoods and communities.

[Groundwork Southcoast](#)

Developing Resilience Zones in Fall River and New Bedford by pairing food access, nature-based solutions, and environmental justice community engagement to reduce heat islands, manage stormwater, and increase fresh food access for a more sustainable and resilient community.

[Lynn Community Health Center](#)

Reducing the environmental impact of the Lynn Community Health Center, enhancing its climate resilience, and improving environmental health disparities to serve as a model for other community health centers.

[Speak for the Trees](#)

Increasing the size and health of Boston's urban tree cover to mitigate the negative health impact of heat islands and air pollution in underserved and under-canopied neighborhoods.

[The Greenway & Asian Community Development Corporation](#)

Developing strategies targeting heat resilience in Chinatown, one of Boston's most densely populated neighborhoods, which suffers from the worst air quality in Massachusetts.

Food Justice Partners (2023 – 2024 cohort)

[All Farmers](#)

Supports the work of over 60 refugee and immigrant farm families in Greater Springfield by providing access to farmland, training and resources. The farmers produce crops that feed more than 500 people, while sharing their cultural farming traditions in their new homes

[Boston Area Gleaners](#)

Collects excess fresh produce from 90 local farms and directs it to distributors that reach more than 2,000 food access organizations every year across Massachusetts. The organization also runs a food hub in Boston and a 25-acre farm.

[Cape Cod Council of Churches](#)

Works with community organizations, churches and volunteers to provide groceries and hot meals through its food pantry and family kitchen. Meals and services are available across Cape Cod and the Islands to people of any or no religious affiliation.

[CommonWealth Kitchen](#)

Operates a business incubator/commercial kitchen and manufacturing space shared by more than 200 entrepreneurs (predominantly BIPOC- and women-owned) and offers business education and valuable connections. CommonWealth Kitchen also connects regional farmers with outlets for surplus produce.

[Grow Food Northampton](#)

Nurtures the local food system in western Massachusetts through its 121-acre community farm, 320-plot community garden, free mobile farmers markets for people experiencing food insecurity, and community education.

[Marion Institute](#)

Connects more than 400 regional food system stakeholders — including farmers, fishermen, social service agencies, food pantry leaders, institutional buyers and other partners — to advocate for policies that improve community health in Fall River, New Bedford and across the South Coast

[Root](#)

Helps young adults build "knife and life" skills through its 14-week culinary job training program and post-graduate support. Some graduates start their careers in Root's Salem-based community catering group, which produces more than 500 meals each week for people experiencing food insecurity across the North Shore.

[Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership \(SEMAP\)](#)

Connects more than 150 farms and food producers to education, hands-on workshops and business assistance resources. The organization also advocates for state policies and programs that promote local agriculture and better land access for farmers.

Racial Justice Partners (2024 – 2025 cohort) – to be announced November 2024

APPENDIX F – 2023 SERVICE DAY PARTNERS

SERVICE DAY PROJECTS SEPTEMBER 28, 2023		
NOT-FOR-PROFIT PARTNER	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
Applause Academy	Taunton	Organize costumes and materials for youth community theater program
Balanced Learning Center	Fall River	Renovate expressive arts therapy room and fill backpacks with basic items for unhoused LGBTQIA youth
Birthday Wishes	Natick	Create birthday celebration kits for unhoused children and youth
Boston Harbor Now	Boston Harbor Islands	Maintain trails and landscape at Peddocks Island
Boston Home	Boston	Facilitate an adaptive arts and recreation day for residents
Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston	Roxbury	Clean and refresh the Yawkey Club
Cape Cod YMCA	Sandwich	Conduct basic repairs at Camp Lyndon site
Carepacks	Weymouth	Pack personal care kits and write letters of encouragement to active military members
Catholic Charities (Sunset Point Camp)	Hull	Perform general upkeep and landscaping of Sunset Point Camp
Waltham Fields Community Farm	Waltham	Maintain and harvest a community garden
Community Servings	Jamaica Plain	Prepare medically tailored meals for home delivery
Cradles to Crayons Giving Factory	Newton	Sort and pack donated children's clothing
Crossroads	Duxbury	Prepare camp for seasonal closure
Dream Day on Cape Cod	Brewster	Prepare camp for seasonal closure
The Esplanade	Boston	Landscape and maintenance around the Charles River
Good Sports	Braintree	Organize sports equipment to be donated to low-income youth
GreenRoots	Chelsea	Plant trees and help "green" the environment
Happy Hope Foundation	Pocasset	Decorate and pack Happy Hope kits for hospitalized or chronically ill children and their families
Holly Hill Farm	Cohasset	Harvest produce for food pantry donation and perform garden maintenance
Hope Floats Healing and Wellness Center	Kingston	Perform outdoor and indoor maintenance projects at a center for families experiencing loss
Hull Lifesaving Museum	Hull	Clean and conduct basic repairs on boathouse and boats
Integrated Center for Group Medical Visits	Lawrence	Construct indoor urban garden and make behavioral health art kits
Jewish Family Services Metrowest	Framingham	Distribute clothing and food to local immigrant and refugee families
JoinedForces	Chicopee	Repair and revitalize the home of a veteran
MA Audubon (Boston Nature Center)	Mattapan	Restore and refresh the Nature Nook children's play area
MA Coalition for the Homeless	Lynn	Build beds for children in need
Magical Moon	Marshfield	Prepare farm and property for annual Harvest Fest, a community event to benefit chronically ill children and their families
New England Village	Pembroke	Beautify gardens for aging population
OCYMCA E. Bridgewater	E. Bridgewater	Renovate Camp Satucket camp store to make food pickup more accessible
OCYMCA Middleboro	Middleboro	Build Camp Yomechas Nature Classroom
OCYMCA Plymouth	Plymouth	Renovate Camp Clark teen space
OCYMCA Stoughton	Stoughton	Expand low ropes course at Camp Christina
Peter Igo Park	Marshfield	Conduct basic park maintenance
Playworks	New Bedford	Paint outdoor recess space at an elementary school
Project Just Because	Hopkinton	Prepare donations for holiday distribution

South Shore YMCA	Hanover	Harvest at Hanover Family Farm
Stars	Westwood	Prepare camp for seasonal closure
Save the Harbor Save the Bay	Boston	Clean Carson Beach
The Salem Pantry	Salem	Prepare food bags for home delivery
Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center	Boston	Maintain trails
UMass Memorial Child Health Equity Center	Worcester	Create child health equity kits to be distributed to families
VA Boston	Brockton	Assist greenhouse and farm-to-table program
West End House	Allston	Prepare for fitness carnival for club members
Weymouth Food Pantry	Weymouth	Prepare meals, work in garden and food pantry
Wonderfund	Burlington	Renovate a family meeting room space at a Department of Children and Families office
WORK Inc.	Dorchester	Build herb and fruit gardens at residential homes for individuals with disabilities
YMCA Greater Boston	Canton	Clean up and winterize camp
Zoo New England	Boston	Plant trees and shrubs
BUILDING-BASED PROJECTS	HINGHAM	DESCRIPTION
Annie's Kindness Blankets	25 Technology Place	Make no-sew kindness blankets
Cradles to Crayons	25 Technology Place	Sort and assemble children's items for distribution
Dignity Matters	25 Technology Place	Assemble feminine hygiene kits
Happy Hope Foundation	25 Technology Place	Package Happy Hope kits for distribution to chronically ill and hospitalized children and their families
Hope and Comfort	25 Technology Place	Package hygiene kits for distribution to local not-for-profit organizations
People Making a Difference	25 Technology Place	Build STEM education kits for Boston Public School students
The Trustees	25 Technology Place	Close out our company garden for the season
VIRTUAL PROJECTS		DESCRIPTION
Annie's Kindness Blankets	Virtual	Make no-sew kindness blankets to be distributed to individuals experiencing loss, mental health challenges and other difficult times
Happy Hope Foundation	Virtual	Package Happy Hope kits for distribution to chronically ill and hospitalized children and their families
Letters Against Isolation	Virtual	Write letters to isolated seniors
Love for Our Elders	Virtual	Write letters to isolated seniors
Operation Gratitude	Virtual	Make paracord bracelets for military members
Foster Love/ <i>Formerly Together We Rise</i>	Virtual	Create superhero and birthday kits for youth involved in the foster care system

APPENDIX G – WINTER ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS

Statewide

Hope and Comfort

Massachusetts Migrant Families Relief Fund

Migrant Children Emergency Fund (a partnership of Cradles to Crayons, Horizons for Homeless Children and Neighborhood Villages)

Greater Boston

ABCD: Action for Boston Community Development

Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program

East Boston Neighborhood Health Center's Community Resource & Wellness Center

Eastie Farm

Greater Boston Food Bank

La Colaborativa

Pine Street Inn

West End House Boys & Girls Club

Women's Lunch Place

YMCA of Greater Boston

Northeastern Massachusetts

Merrimack Valley Food Bank

Our Neighbor's Table

YMCA of North Shore

Southeastern Massachusetts

Damien's Place

Interfaith Social Services

South Shore Food Bank / Weymouth Food Pantry

YMCA of Cape Cod

YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts

Metrowest

Project Just Because

South Middlesex Opportunity Council

Central Massachusetts

El Buen Samaritano Food Program

Legendary Legacies

Worcester Community Action Council

Worcester County Food Bank

YMCA of Central Massachusetts

Western Massachusetts

Berkshire Community Action Council

Boys & Girls Clubs of Holyoke

Community Action Pioneer Valley

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts