Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts to Issue More Than $100 Million in Premium Relief to Insured Customers and Members

Brings company's COVID-related financial support to more than $200 million

BOSTON, Aug. 5, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts ("Blue Cross") announced today that it will return $101 million in premium refunds and anticipated rebates to its customers and members as a result of lower than anticipated health care costs during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The refunds are in addition to the $116 million Blue Cross has invested to support its members, customers, clinical partners, and the community throughout the pandemic, bringing the company's COVID-related financial commitments to more than $217 million.

"Since many elective procedures and routine visits have been deferred during the pandemic, our medical costs during the second quarter were lower than we originally anticipated," said Andrew Dreyfus, president and CEO of Blue Cross. "We're giving money back to our customers and members to help provide financial relief during what we know is an incredibly challenging and uncertain time."

Credits will be applied in September and reflected on the next invoice for fully insured employer groups and members (including under-65 direct pay and Medex members) and will total 15% of their May 2020 medical premium. Before the end of the year, Medicare Advantage members will receive a one month "premium holiday" during which they will not be charged their monthly premium.

Blue Cross has taken significant steps to expand access to care throughout the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency, including:

- Covering all medically necessary covered services with in-network providers, via phone (telephonic) or virtually (telehealth), at no cost to members.
- Waiving member cost share (co-pays, co-insurance and deductibles) for medically necessary COVID-19 testing, counseling and treatment at doctor's offices, urgent care centers and emergency departments, in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Massachusetts Department of Public Health guidelines.
- Removing administrative barriers, such as prior authorizations and referrals, for medically appropriate treatment for COVID-19.
- Announcing a set of bold new initiatives to ensure our members have timely access to high-quality, affordable mental health care, including a 50% increase in payments to child psychiatrists, permanently paying for telehealth visits at in-person rates, and offering psychiatry visits via our national telehealth platform, WellConnection
- Increasing access to prescription medications. Members have access to early refills of their prescription maintenance medications.
- Staffing and promoting a dedicated member help line (**888-372-1970**) for all COVID-19 related inquiries, as well as a 24/7 nurse hotline (**888-247-2583**), which is available free to all members and offers a safe and convenient clinical resource for minor ailments or questions.
- The company has also taken steps to ensure that its clinical partners can focus on the care of Blue Cross members during the COVID-19 emergency, including:
- Accelerating $40 million in payments to provider groups participating in the Alternative Quality Contract (AQC) to assist with the financial pressures associated with the COVID-19 public health emergency
- Offering a new, value-based payment program for independent primary care practices, designed to improve quality, lower costs, and provide immediate financial support
- Contributing $1 million to the Massachusetts Dental Society's COVID-19 Recovery Fund, to assist financially struggling dental practices and help offset the additional costs for personal protective equipment
- Developing an expedited credentialing and enrollment process for practitioners, designed to help meet the growing demand for care during the pandemic
- Removing administrative requirements so caregivers can focus on patients, not paperwork
- Keeping operations running at full capacity to process claims quickly/respond to inquiries

Additionally, Blue Cross and its Foundation have committed significant financial support to COVID-19 relief efforts, along with pro bono and in-kind support for a total community investment of nearly $10 million. These efforts included:

- Redeploying more than 100 Blue Cross employees as contact tracers for Massachusetts' first in the nation COVID-19 Community Tracing Collaborative
- Supporting the state's largest COVID-19 field hospital, Boston Hope, by deploying more than 20 Blue Cross

clinicians to support patient care
- Partnering with Blue Cross' food service vendor to prepare and distribute more than 50,000 premade nutritious meals to support food insecurity across greater Boston
- Partnering with the American Red Cross to host public blood drives at Blue Cross' Quincy office to help address the dramatic need for blood donations
- Launching an online giving platform that enables employees to donate directly to any Massachusetts-based not-for-profit affected by COVID-19, matched dollar-for-dollar by the company

For more information on how Blue Cross is responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency, please click here.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (www.bluecrossma.com) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. We are committed to the relentless pursuit of quality, affordable health care with an unparalleled consumer experience. Consistent with our promise to always put our members first, we are rated among the nation's best health plans for member satisfaction and quality. Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

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