IHI AWARDS $16.5 MILLION IN GRANTS FROM BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MASSACHUSETTS TO IMPROVE HEALTH EQUITY IN MASS.

Funds will support initiatives aimed at reducing inequities in hypertension and diabetes care, improving data collection, and more

BOSTON, Sept. 27, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) has awarded $16.5 million in Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA)-funded grants to 12 health systems across Massachusetts. The grants will fund projects to improve equity of care and race, ethnicity, and language data collection practices.

The following organizations were awarded grants: Atrius Health, Boston Medical Center, Baycare Health Partners, Boston Children's Hospital, Beth Israel Lahey Health, Mass General Brigham, Reliant Medical Group, SoNE Health, South Shore Health, Southcoast Health, Steward Health Care, and Tufts Medicine Integrated Health. These groups are all participants in BCBSMA's Alternative Quality Contract (AQC), which was introduced in 2009 and changed a century-old medical reimbursement system from one based primarily on fee-for-service for doctor visits, tests and hospital admissions to one based on the quality of care, health outcomes, and patient experience.

A wide range of projects will be funded, including efforts to reduce disparities in hypertension and diabetes care; accelerate equity in cancer screening; expand implicit bias training for staff; and improve organizational data collection practices to ensure changes are transparent, measurable and actionable over time.

"This is part of a multi-year commitment we've made to address health inequities," said Andrew Dreyfus, President and CEO of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. "We know clinicians can't do this alone. As a health plan, we have a responsibility to address inequities directly with our members and by supporting the clinicians who serve them. We know these collective efforts will ultimately improve health care for all our members, across every racial and ethnic group."

"It is extremely rare for a health plan to support health systems in such a tangible way, and we commend BCBSMA for their bold leadership to challenge the status quo and improve health equity," said Dr. Kedar Mate, President and CEO of IHI. "This funding will catalyze health systems and enable them to build crucial infrastructure to advance equity, remove barriers to getting the work done, and open up new avenues for innovation."

The grants are part of the commitment made by BCBSMA in December 2021 to provide $25 million in funding, distributed by IHI, to support AQC physician practices and hospitals in an Equity Action Community. That community was formed last fall by IHI and BCBSMA to foster shared learning across institutions and measurable improvement in the equity of patient care in Massachusetts. Initial funding totaling $3 million was made available to provider groups to support participation in the community. Additional funding will be granted in coming months to smaller provider groups that participate in the community.

"Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts is committed to collaborating with clinicians to support health equity efforts," said Dr. Mark Friedberg, the not-for-profit health plan's senior vice president, performance measurement & improvement. "This includes giving AQC provider groups data on their equity performance, technical assistance in equity improvement via the Equity Action Community, and now this significant investment in equity improvement capabilities, which begins our movement toward value-based contracts with incentives for improved equity in care in 2023 and beyond."

The 12 grant awardees were selected by the IHI Grant Review Committee, comprised of national leaders in health equity and equitable grantmaking as well as community members. Project proposals were scored based on their focus on reducing inequities in clinical care, feasibility, sustainability, and impact on equity and anti-racism.

About the Institute for Healthcare Improvement

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement is an independent not-for-profit organization based in Boston. For 30 years, IHI has used improvement science to advance and sustain better outcomes in health and health systems across the world. IHI brings awareness of safety and quality to millions, catalyzes learning and the systematic improvement of care, develops solutions to previously intractable challenges, and mobilizes health systems, communities, regions, and nations to reduce harm and deaths. IHI collaborates with a growing community to spark bold, inventive ways to improve the health of individuals and populations. IHI generates optimism, harvests fresh ideas, and supports anyone, anywhere who wants to profoundly change health and health care

for the better. Learn more at ihi.org.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (http://www.bluecrossma.org) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. We are committed to the relentless pursuit of quality, affordable and equitable 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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For further information: Amy McHugh, amy.mchugh@bcbsma.com

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