Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts and Community Health Centers Team Up to Address Barriers to COVID Vaccine Access

$1 million contribution from Blue Cross to help provide transportation to and from vaccination sites in underserved communities

BOSTON, Feb. 11, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts ("Blue Cross") today announced a new effort with the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers ("the League") to help provide equitable access to COVID-19 vaccinations.

Blue Cross will contribute $1 million to fund free rides to and from COVID-19 vaccination sites across the state to support community health centers, underserved communities, and vulnerable populations. The new initiative was announced during a press conference today with Governor Charlie Baker at the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center.

"The goal now is to get people vaccinated, and access to those appointments is critical," said Andrew Dreyfus, Blue Cross' president and CEO. "We know lack of access to transportation is a significant barrier in communities hard hit by COVID-19. The Community Health Centers' deep experience will help connect more of our neighbors with vaccines that can save lives and help end the pandemic."

Blue Cross' contribution will support tens of thousands of free rides to and from COVID-19 vaccination sites. The goal is to launch the program in the next few weeks in coordination with the League, which will assist in identifying participating community health centers.

"I've always said those closest to the disease need to be closest to the vaccine. Members of the communities we serve have disproportionately contracted, suffered, and died from this terrible virus," said Michael Curry, president and CEO of the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers and a member of the state's *COVID*-19 Vaccine *Advisory* Group. "We are proud to partner with Blue Cross to help bring our patients better access to these life-saving vaccines."

"Since the pandemic started, we have been on the frontlines, providing COVID-19 testing and treatment throughout the local community," said Manny Lopes, president and CEO of the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center. "Now, we are on the frontlines of the vaccination effort too. We welcome this new initiative, which will make it easier for our most vulnerable patients to get the vaccinations they desperately need."

Blue Cross and the League will work together toward their mutual goal of addressing disparities in access to COVID-19 vaccinations in underserved communities throughout Massachusetts. The organizations are looking at a variety of options which may include grants to community health centers, partnering with a ride share program, and other potential transportation solutions.

Today's contribution comes on top of the $11 million Blue Cross and its Foundation has invested in the community during the COVID-19 crisis.

For more information on how Blue Cross is supporting its members during the COVID-19 public health emergency, visit the company's Coronavirus Resource Center.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (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 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.BlueLinks for Employers

About the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers
The Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (the League) is a 501 (c)(3) membership organization supporting and representing the Commonwealth's 52 community health centers, which offer primary and preventive care to more than one million residents. The League serves as an information resource on community-based primary care to policymakers, opinion leaders, and the media. It provides a wide range of technical assistance to its health center members, including advocacy on health policy issues, support for workforce development, clinical care and technology initiatives, and guidance to state leaders and community-based organizations seeking to open health centers.

About the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center
The East Boston Neighborhood Health Center (EBNHC) has been a vital part of the community for 50 years, providing easily accessible, high-quality health care to all who live and work in East Boston and the surrounding communities of Chelsea, Revere, Everett, Winthrop, and, most recently, the South End. EBNHC is the largest community health center in Massachusetts and one of the largest in the nation, now serving nearly 120,000 patients and employing more than 1,300 staff members. We're proud to be a 2020 Forbes Best-in-State Employer and a six-time awardee of the Boston Globe's Top Places to Work.

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