



Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation Announces Formation of the Massachusetts Medicaid Policy Institute; Noted Health Expert to Lead Institute

September 24, 2003 (Boston, MA) -- The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation (BCBSMA Foundation) today announced the creation of the Massachusetts Medicaid Policy Institute (MMPI), an organization that will be a source for independent, non-partisan information and analysis of the state's Medicaid program.

The Massachusetts Medicaid program, often referred to as MassHealth, is the second largest source of health care coverage in the state, covering nearly one million people in the state, including one in four children, almost one-third of people with disabilities, and 70 percent of individuals in nursing homes.

“The mission of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation is to expand access to health care, both through grants and policy initiatives,” said Andrew Dreyfus, president of BCBSMA Foundation. “Medicaid plays an essential access role in our state by providing health coverage to nearly one million people, most of whom would otherwise be uninsured. So preserving and strengthening the Medicaid program is critical to the mission of the Foundation. By providing timely and impartial information and analysis, we hope the Institute will also encourage a more rigorous and thoughtful debate about the future of the Medicaid program.”

In addition to naming a Board of Directors of well-respected leaders from across the state (see attached list), the BCBSMA Foundation announced that Nancy Turnbull, a faculty member at the Harvard School of Public Health and former First Deputy Commissioner of Insurance at the Massachusetts Division of Insurance, will be the executive director of MMPI. Turnbull will retain her position at Harvard, while leading MMPI. “I look forward to working in close collaboration with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Legislature, other state agencies responsible for Medicaid and other key stakeholders,” said Turnbull. “We hope MMPI will be an important new addition to the health policy landscape in Massachusetts.”

“Massachusetts faces many fiscal challenges, and growing Medicaid spending is one of the biggest,” said Rick Lord, President and CEO of Associated Industries of Massachusetts and co-chair of the MMPI board. “Current increases in Medicaid spending are not sustainable with existing resources. But Medicaid is not just a state budget problem, it's a challenge for all of us, including the business community. Unless we find new approaches to the program, we will be facing increasing difficult choices about how to control rising costs and maintain coverage. Employers have a vital interest in this problem and these choices.”

The goal of the MMPI will be to promote the development of effective Medicaid policy approaches through research and policy analysis and to increase overall awareness and understanding of Medicaid's programs, successes and challenges. The Institute will collaborate closely with state policymakers, legislators, health policy and advocacy groups, consumer organizations, researchers, providers and others. Formed as a subsidiary of the BCBSMA Foundation, the initial funding for the MMPI came in the form of a \$1 million grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts to the BCBSMA Foundation. Over the next two years, MMPI plans to become a separate, independent organization.

"The Medicaid program is an essential part of the health care safety net for the many of the most vulnerable people in our state," said Jackie Jenkins-Scott, co-chair of the MMPI board and president and CEO of Dimock Community Health Center. "The Institute hopes to play an influential role in helping to increase understanding and support for Medicaid and developing policy approaches that strengthen the program's effectiveness."

"Massachusetts should be proud of its long history of leadership in Medicaid," said Philip Johnston, president of Philip W. Johnston Associates and chair of the BCBSMA Foundation board. "Expansions in Medicaid eligibility have been the major reason why our state has one of the lowest rates of uninsurance in the nation. The Foundation is committed to helping develop policy approaches that preserve and protect that tradition."

Since its inception in 2001, the BCBSMA Foundation (www.bcbsmafoundation.org) has awarded grants of more than \$5 million to spark innovation and strengthen services for uninsured and low-income individuals and families in Massachusetts. The Foundation is governed by its own 17-member Board of Directors and operates separately from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. BCBSMA pledged an initial endowment of \$55 million, making the Foundation one of the largest health philanthropies in Massachusetts.

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