

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Coalition Calls For Community-Based Prevention Dollars As Part of Health Care Cost Reform**

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BOSTON, April 27, 2011—The Massachusetts Public Health Association, Health Care For All, Boston Public Health Commission, and Health Resources In Action will hold a press conference May 3, at 10 a.m. at the State House, Room 437 to discuss how medical costs can be significantly reduced by focusing on community-based prevention.

Following the press conference, the coalition of organizations will testify before the Public Health Committee on the Prevention and Cost Control Trust bill filed by Rep. Jason Lewis (HB 1498), which calls for the creation of a stable source of funding for community health programs that prevent disease and cut health care costs.

A January 2011 study published in The American Journal of Public Health found that a 5% reduction in the prevalence of diabetes and hypertension could save the Commonwealth about \$450 million each year.

“If effective community prevention programs were put in place now, medical care costs in Massachusetts could be reduced by nearly \$3 billion over the next decade,” said Urban Institute Senior Fellow Brenda Spillman, PhD and coauthor of the study, “Potential National and State Medical Care Savings from Primary Disease Prevention.”

Spillman will attend the press conference and talk about recent research on state level cost savings from prevention of chronic disease.

“Every year, we spend most of our health care dollars caring for individuals once they’ve already become sick, and only three percent of our health care dollars on preventing diseases from developing in the first place,” said MPHA Executive Director Valerie Bassett. “Community-based prevention in our schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods will prevent illness and injury before they happen, saving us the costs of treatment as well as untold human suffering.”

Examples of community-based prevention include:

- Home-based programs to reduce indoor asthma triggers
- Serving healthier foods in schools and child care centers
- Interventions to reduce youth and adult tobacco use
- Improving access to sidewalks and bicycles lanes to encourage physical activity

“Adhering to treatment and following advice from your doctor is critical,” said HCFA Executive Director Amy Whitcomb Slemmer. “But we aren’t going to reduce the incidences of chronic disease without prevention in the community.”

Speakers at the press conference will include:

- **Brenda Spillman**, PhD, Health Policy Center, The Urban Institute, who will talk about recent research on state level cost savings from prevention of chronic disease.
- **Phil Edmundson**, CEO, William Gallagher Associates, who will talk about the importance of disease prevention in reducing employer-related health care costs.
- **Chris Economos**, PhD, Tufts University, who will talk about groundbreaking research into community-based prevention in Somerville.
- **Mary Giannetti**, Program Director, Fitchburg Mass in Motion, will explain Fitchburg’s strategies to prevent obesity.
- **Amy Whitcomb Slemmer**, Executive Director of Health Care for All, who will talk about the importance of melding community-based and clinical strategies to reduce costs.
- **Valerie Bassett**, Executive Director, Massachusetts Public Health Association, will emcee.
- **Rep. Jason Lewis**, lead sponsor of legislation to create a Prevention Trust as part of payment reform.
- **Senator Richard T. Moore**, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Healthcare Financing.
- **Senator Harriette Chandler**, Senate Chair, Prevention for Health Legislative Caucus, and Assistant Vice-Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

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### More About the Coalition Partners

- The **Massachusetts Public Health Association** is a statewide membership organization of people working to protect the health and safety of all our Commonwealth’s residents. MPHA is working for a healthy Massachusetts by promoting laws, policies, and programs that protect the health of our families, communities, and workplaces.
- **Health Resources in Action** has been a leader in developing programs that advance public health and medical research for over fifty years. Through Community Health and Medical Foundation divisions, we work with governments, communities, scientists, and nonprofit organizations that share an imperative for resolving today’s most critical public health issues through policy, research, prevention, and health promotion.
- **Health Care for All** seeks to create a consumer-centered health care system that provides comprehensive, affordable, accessible, culturally competent, high quality care and consumer education for everyone, especially the most vulnerable. We work to achieve this as leaders in public policy, advocacy, education and service to consumers in Massachusetts.
- The **Boston Public Health Commission** (BPHC) is the health department for the City of Boston and an independent public agency providing a wide range of health services and programs. The mission of BPHC is to protect, promote, and preserve the health and well-being of all Boston residents, particularly the most vulnerable.