Blue Cross Blue Shield/MassINC Survey Finds Public Health Campaign Leading to Near Universal Awareness and Action on Coronavirus

BOSTON, March 31, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- An unprecedented public health campaign aimed at slowing the spread of coronavirus is having a near-universal effect on public behavior, the third week of a Massachusetts tracking poll finds. New key findings include:



- Nearly all (97%) of Massachusetts residents say they understand what actions they should take to prevent further spread of coronavirus.
- 96% of Massachusetts residents say they are seeing either nobody or only a few people. 85% are canceling social plans, and 86% report not shopping at all or only going if it's essential.
- 91% have increased handwashing and 92% now avoid physical greetings.
- 95% say they are following news about the outbreak somewhat or very closely.

Weeks into the crisis, public concern about the danger of coronavirus continues to tick up.

- Fully 95% of residents think the virus poses a very (68%) or somewhat (27%) serious threat to people in Massachusetts, and 72% think the threat is still getting more serious.
- The share who think the virus is a serious threat to them personally has risen from 68% during the first wave of the survey to 79% now.

Residents see major economic issues ahead.

- One in four residents (25%) say they will face serious financial hardship within a month, and another 15% anticipate issues the month after that.
- Since the crisis began, 16% report losing a job. Among those still employed, a new high of 32% say they have lost part of their paycheck.
- These difficulties are strongly concentrated among lower-income households and part-time and hourly workers. Among those with household incomes under $50,000, 41% anticipate hardship in the month ahead, 21% report job losses, and about half (48%) of those still employed say they have lost a portion of their paycheck.

Despite these challenges, residents are standing strong in the battle against the spread of coronavirus. Just 9% think the reaction has gone too far, while the vast majority say it has been about right (60%) or could go further still (28%). This includes over 80% of those who have lost a job or pay since the crisis started, meaning those taking the brunt of the economic hit still support the strong response.

"I've never seen anything like the level of awareness and action described in these Massachusetts numbers. And the responses that are not already universal are still growing each week," said Steve Koczela, president of The MassINC Polling Group. "Even in the face of great personal difficulty, residents are doing their part to help."

"Simple, consistent communications across the board from public officials, providers, health plans, and community groups have resulted in this extraordinarily successful public health messaging at a time we need it most," said Katherine Dallow, MD, MPH, vice president of clinical programs and strategy at Blue Cross. "Stay home whenever possible, wash your hands regularly, and contact your provider if you begin to feel ill."

The findings are part of the third wave of data from a statewide tracking poll (conducted March 24-29) on the coronavirus

sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts and conducted by The MassINC Polling Group. The survey monitors key elements of public opinion and reaction and was commissioned as part of Blue Cross' broader efforts to support the community's response to COVID-19.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Blue Cross has expanded coverage and access to care for its members, and launched a regularly updated resource center that includes information about how to stay safe, a downloadable tip sheet for employers, a video featuring a Blue Cross physicians, and answers to frequently asked questions. In addition, Blue Cross' health news site, Coverage, produces timely, original news articles reporting what health consumers need to know about COVID-19.

Full survey results can be found here and here.

Methodology
These results are based on a statewide survey of 900 residents of Massachusetts. Live telephone interviews were conducted March 24-29, 2020 via both landline and cell phone as part of a tracking survey. The final data was weighted to known and estimated parameters on gender, age, race, county, and education. The margin of sampling error is 3.0 percentage points with a 95 percent level of confidence.

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.

About the MassINC Polling Group
The MassINC Polling Group is a nonpartisan public opinion research firm serving public, private, and social-sector clients. MPG elevates the public's voice with cutting edge methods and rigorous analysis. Based in Boston, MPG serves a nationwide client base.

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