MASSACHUSETTS RESIDENTS CITE HIGH COSTS AS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE IN HEALTH CARE

Trails only inflation and the cost of housing as top worries

BOSTON, March 20, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- The cost of care is the most critical health care issue facing Massachusetts residents, according to a new Beacon Research survey commissioned by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts ("Blue Cross"). Forty percent of residents surveyed said they are putting off seeing a doctor or going to a hospital due to the cost of care. Further, residents reported noticing the largest health care cost increase from hospital bills.



"These findings underscore what we know and hear from our members on a regular basis," said Sarah Iselin, president and CEO of Blue Cross. "Residents are struggling with health care costs, causing them to put off care and make tough decisions. This is deeply concerning in a state committed to health care access and, without action, could lead to health implications statewide. This poll underscores the urgent need for our health care community to work together on managing costs and ensuring affordable options for residents, businesses, and state government."

Key survey findings included:

- The cost of health care remains a top issue of concern for Massachusetts residents, behind only inflation and the cost of housing.
- When it comes to the topic of health care, cost is the overwhelmingly most important issue, topping quality of care, access to care and equity of care by almost a 3:1 margin.
- The biggest increase in health care costs noticed by consumers is high hospital bills.
- Health care costs for co-pays and bills are viewed as a problem for nearly three-quarters of MA residents, trailing only the costs of groceries and monthly housing costs.
- Among Massachusetts residents who visited an emergency room last year, half described their experience waiting for care in emergency rooms as unreasonable, with 60% waiting two hours or more for care and three out of ten report waiting four to twelve hours or more.

"These results show that consumers are deeply concerned about the costs of health care," said Chris Anderson, founder and president of Beacon Research. "This poll provides a real time snapshot of how prices are impacting their decisions on whether to access care and what consumers are experiencing in our health care system statewide."

Blue Cross is working with others in health care to responsibly moderate the growth in health care spending. Among the steps the company is taking:

- Working closely with hospitals and physicians to agree on contracts that protect families and businesses from unsustainable health care price increases.
- Offering new, innovative options that improve access to affordable primary care and mental health services.
- Streamlining prior authorization requirements to ensure that services and treatments contribute to improved health outcomes at lower costs for members.
- Addressing prescription drugs costs to ensure members are getting high quality, clinically appropriate prescription drugs.
- Spending more than 90 cents of every premium dollar directly on medical care and prescription drugs and less than 10 cents on administrative costs.

Methodology

A total of 1,000 Massachusetts adults were interviewed for this survey between February 28- March 6. The survey was conducted using a mixed methodology approach with approximately one-quarter of the interviews conducted by live interviewer telephone calls and three-quarters via a representative online panel. Slight weights were used to bring the demographics of the sample in line with actual demographics of Massachusetts.

Complete poll results can be found here.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (bluecrossma.org) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. We are committed to showing up for everyone like they're the only one and guiding our members to the exceptional health care they deserve – affordably, equitably and seamlessly. In keeping with our commitment, 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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