Healthy People / Healthy Economy

A Coalition to Make Massachusetts the National Leader in Health and Wellness
In 2007, a report written for the Boston Foundation by the New England Healthcare Institute, titled *The Boston Paradox: Lots of Health Care, Not Enough Health*, was the first view of Bostonians’ health status, health care delivery metrics and health care costs under one cover.

With stunning statistics, the report revealed that despite increasing access to health care and accelerating health care costs, Greater Bostonians faced a rising tide of preventable chronic disease. These trends threaten both the physical health of Greater Boston residents and the fiscal health of cities, towns, businesses and households as health care costs absorb ever more resources and crowd out investment in other crucial priorities.

Two years later, the continuing partnership between the Boston Foundation and the New England Healthcare Institute resulted in another publication, this time focusing on the entire Commonwealth of Massachusetts. *Healthy People in a Healthy Economy* contained an action plan designed to combat the findings of the previous report.

The second report, which came at the height of the recession, made the point that more than half of all Massachusetts residents are either overweight or obese—a risk factor for Type 2 diabetes and many other preventable chronic diseases. Indeed, diabetes in Massachusetts has jumped nearly 40 percent in just a decade, and three out of every five people with Type 2 diabetes are at risk of developing complications such as heart disease and stroke. At a forum held at the Boston Foundation in June of 2010, participants discussed the need for a major coalition that would tackle the crisis—and move toward making Massachusetts the national leader in health and wellness.

“What we’re really talking about today is changing the conditions of people’s lives and public health writ large. We are at a turning point, with the opportunity to develop a critical mass of well-coordinated activities. I am committing your state health department to participate in this important work.”

John Auerbach, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, at the June 2010 forum
CRISIS: AN OBESITY EPIDEMIC

In Massachusetts, some 30 percent of children and 58 percent of all residents are either overweight or obese—and the obesity rate has risen by eight percent in just eight years. While Massachusetts ranks well among all states on measures of obesity, our obesity rate today is equal to the worst among all states just 15 years ago. Moreover, overweight and obesity rates in Massachusetts reveal great disparities by race and ethnicity, household income and geography. Obesity is a risk factor for numerous preventable chronic diseases, from Type 2 diabetes to heart disease, stroke and some cancers. Obesity-related expenditures cost Massachusetts more than $1.8 billion per year, a figure that will continue to grow unless action is taken now.

Percentage Overweight & Obese Residents, Massachusetts, 1996 and 2008
CRISIS: THE RISE IN PREVENTABLE CHRONIC DISEASE

Type 2 diabetes, once unheard of in children, now represents a significant portion of all diabetes reported in the Commonwealth. Overall, diabetes has jumped by nearly 40 percent in just a decade. Three out of every five people with Type 2 diabetes will develop complications, such as heart disease, stroke or eyesight problems. The rate of avoidable hospitalization for hypertension, or high blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart disease, has risen more than 90 percent over the last decade. A Milken Institute study estimated that chronic disease takes a $34 billion toll on the Massachusetts economy every year.
According to a study by the New England Healthcare Institute, U.S. health care costs are wildly out of alignment with the actual determinants of health. About 50 percent of health status is determined by diet, exercise, smoking, stress and safety; 20 percent by exposure to environmental toxins; 20 percent by genetic predisposition; and just 10 percent by access to health care. Yet the vast majority—88 percent—of Americans’ health dollars are spent on access to care and treatment, with just four percent spent on lifestyle options and choices and eight percent on environmental and genetic factors. This mismatch results in higher and higher costs for less and less health benefit. While many Americans believe that our health care system is the best in the world, the fact is that our health relative to other comparable nations, which spend much less per capita, is declining on most measures, even survival rates for adults age 45-65.
CRISIS: **RISING HEALTH CARE COSTS = FISCAL CROWD OUT**

In Massachusetts, all public and private spending on health care now exceeds $60 billion a year. State spending on health care alone increased by more than 60 percent from 2001 to 2009, in contrast to total state spending, which increased barely more than 20 percent over the same time period. Recouping even a fraction of the funds spent on unnecessary and wasteful health care, avoidable hospitalization and the management of preventable chronic diseases would free up resources for education, housing, recreation, nutrition, environmental health and the other health determinants that now compete unsuccessfully with health care.

![Graph showing all public and private spending on health care, Massachusetts, 2009](image.png)

![Graph showing state spending imbalance, net change, 2001-2009](image.png)
Healthy People/Healthy Economy is a coalition to make Massachusetts the preeminent state in the country for health and wellness.

The coalition is targeted at stemming a rising tide of preventable chronic illness and the threat it poses to the Commonwealth’s health, fiscal stability and economic competitiveness. Left unchecked, higher rates of preventable chronic illness will create more medical needs and medical spending, draining limited resources from vital investments in education, the environment and other priorities that have a profound impact on the quality of our health.

The Boston Foundation and the New England Healthcare Institute, with the support of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and numerous other committed stakeholders, are launching Healthy People/Healthy Economy to create a broad coalition for action in the many areas that impact health and health behaviors.

**The Problem:**
- Rising preventable chronic disease
- Rising health care costs
- Imbalance between health care spending and investments in the actual determinants of health

**Goals of the Coalition:**
- Expand physical activity
- Increase access to healthy foods
- Create incentives for health and wellness
- Encourage citizen education and engagement

**The Long Term Goals:**
- Reduce overweight and obesity
- Reduce rates of preventable chronic disease
- Reduce health care costs through increased prevention and health promotion
**GOAL:** EXPAND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

**PRIORITY INITIATIVES:**
- Increase physical activity for children
- Improve the built environment for activity and fitness

**BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS:**
- Expanded physical activity and structured recess in schools
- Increased out-of-school physical activity and walking to school
- Increased biking access and walkability
- Increased usage and number of parks and playgrounds

**BOTTOM LINE:**
- More children and adults engaging in physical activity to achieve healthy weight and improve overall health
GOAL: INCREASE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

PRIORITY INITIATIVES:
- Increase access to healthy foods in schools
- Improve availability of healthy foods in all neighborhoods

BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS:
- More farmers markets and public markets
- More healthy meals served in schools
- Reduction in sugar sweetened beverage consumption
- Elimination of ‘food deserts,’ areas with limited access to healthy foods, through business development
- Elimination of trans fats

BOTTOM LINE:
- Incorporate incentives to improve healthy behaviors at the workplace, at home and in the community
GOAL: **CREATE INCENTIVES FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

**PRIORITY INITIATIVES:**
- Encourage health insurance benefit design to enhance health promotion and prevention
- Establish health care payment incentives for health promotion, prevention and stronger primary care
- Support sustainable and appropriate levels of public health funding

**BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS:**
- Increase in employee health promotion programs
- Sustainable public health funding to promote health and wellness
- Use of payment incentives by payers and employers

**BOTTOM LINE:**
- Incorporate incentives to improve healthy behaviors at the workplace, at home and in the community
GOAL: **ENCOURAGE CITIZEN EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

**PRIORITY INITIATIVES:**
- Improve health literacy
- Develop and implement metrics to track health
- Define and establish health impact assessments
- Partner with national health and fitness efforts

**BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS:**
- Menu labeling in all restaurants
- Implementation of Body Mass Index screening and reporting
- Comprehensive, statewide public awareness campaigns for better health
- Use of health impact assessments
- Public understanding of linkages between healthy behaviors and overall health

**BOTTOM LINE:**
- Strengthen public awareness, understanding and motivation to engage in healthy behaviors
Why Should Massachusetts Lead the Nation?

In the past several years, diverse coalitions and commissions have come together to push for the enactment of our state’s groundbreaking legislation, with the goal of providing near-universal coverage for the Commonwealth’s residents and recommending a path toward cost containment through payment reform.

Now, more than ever, it is time for Massachusetts leaders to harness the remarkable assets of our region—including world-class institutions, a pioneering community of health professionals and a heritage of activism, innovation and accomplishments in public health—to catalyze a health revolution. Today’s tight fiscal constraints make our goals more challenging—and more essential than ever.

Building on the success of Mass in Motion, local efforts such as Shape Up Somerville, the expertise of the Boston Public Health Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and innovative programs run by our stellar community health centers as well as a number of health insurance providers and a myriad of neighborhood-based groups, now is the time to move forward.
Shared Responsibility:
It Will Take All of Us Working Together

We invite you to visit www.healthypeoplehealthyeconomy.org to learn how you or your organization can join this pioneering effort to improve our state’s health and economy.

Measuring Our Progress

As we work together with our colleagues in virtually all aspects of civic life in the Commonwealth, we do so with a deep commitment to measuring our success in turning our health crisis around and reaching our goals. The Healthy People/Healthy Economy Scorecard will be an annual report that tracks progress in Massachusetts towards implementation of policies, practices and programs that improve health and wellness. The first Scorecard will be released in June 2011.

We invite you to visit www.healthypeoplehealthyeconomy.org to learn how you or your organization can join this pioneering effort to improve our state’s health and economy.
Healthy People/Healthy Economy Coalition

Co-Chairs

Valerie Fleishman, Executive Director, New England Healthcare Institute
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