

For Immediate Release:**Blue Cross NC's Unprecedented COVID-19 Commitment Nearly \$600 Million in Support of Members, Employers and Providers**

- *\$318 million in coverage and access to care*
- *\$275 million in improving cash flow for members, employers and providers*

More information can be found at [BlueCrossNC.com/Coronavirus](https://www.BlueCrossNC.com/Coronavirus)

DURHAM, N.C. – Commitments made by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) to provide financial support to members, employers, providers, and community organizations to address the COVID-19 pandemic are projected to reach up to \$593 million with \$318 million in projected costs to improve access to care and \$275 million projected to address cash flow challenges facing members, employers and providers.

“Blue Cross is taking unprecedented action in its commitment to the health and well-being of all North Carolinians,” said Gerald Petkau, COO and interim CEO of Blue Cross NC. “Our goal is to remove barriers within our means to ensure our health care providers, communities and members are well-equipped to fight COVID-19.”

Access to Care - \$313 million

Blue Cross NC's swift action to increase access to care for members during the COVID-19 crisis is projected to result in up to \$313 million in financial support. This includes:

- Eliminating member cost-sharing for COVID-19 screening, testing and treatment. By expanding virtual coverage as part of this, telehealth usage doubled from February to March.
- Removing administrative tasks like prior approvals to ensure access and speed up care .
- Enabling early medication refills.

New Community Investments to Address COVID-19 Challenges – \$5 million

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing more North Carolinians across the state to lack consistent access to food and other basic needs. As part of Blue Cross NC's commitment to improve the health and well-being of all North Carolinians, the company is immediately providing an additional \$5 million to support organizations improving access to food and other critical community needs (see list below). The company will continue to evaluate long-term solutions and investments to remove barriers to basic needs.

- **The Food Bank** of Central & Eastern NC, MANNA FoodBank, Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC, Food Bank of the Albemarle, Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina, Second Harvest Food Bank of Southeast NC - to distribute nearly 1.2 million meals across all 100 counties.
- **Inter-Faith Food Shuttle** – to secure packaging and products to produce and distribute 75,000 blast-frozen meals to high-need communities and reactivate its mobile unit to deliver meals. Funding will also provide needed infrastructure for the future.

- **Carolina Farm Stewardship Association** – to support the development of a network of food hubs, farmers and farmer co-ops to package boxes of fresh food to be delivered to 2,500 out-of-work restaurant and hospitality industry workers.
- **Meals on Wheels of NC** – to supplement government funding received for the purchase of food by providing each county in North Carolina with flexible support to operate senior meal programs.
- **Feeding the Carolinas** – to provide statewide support across the Feeding the Carolinas network for partner agency food pantries.
- **Farmer Foodshare** – to support the delivery of fresh food from farmers across North Carolina to schools and other emergency food providers.
- **Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP)** – to create market connections for farmers and vendors to replace disrupted sales, including operating a minimum of three centralized CDC-compliant farmers markets/pick-up sites and supporting the preparation and distribution of unsold farm products to food-insecure communities.
- **Durham Public Schools Foundation** – to provide fresh food to families for weekend meals and increase staffing support. Blue Cross NC’s cafeteria vendor will provide 4,000 meals each week in conjunction with DPS Foundation’s efforts.
- **El Centro Hispano** – to continue providing support to Latinx community members with food, financial assistance, health screenings and education from increased demand during COVID-19.
- **United Way 211** – NC 211 is the crisis line used statewide by North Carolinians during COVID-19. United Way 211 will be able to access equipment and IT services needed to ensure call quality and routing of calls, which have surged in the wake of the pandemic.
- **Camino Community Center** – to expand operational capacity and provide food to more than 300 members of the Latinx community each week.
- **UNC School System** – the Student Relief Fund at the UNC School System will be able to increase the assistance it gives students across all 16 universities and colleges within the school system.
- **North Carolina Restaurant Workers Relief Fund** – Blue Cross NC matched nearly \$40,000 in Thrive NC festival ticket purchaser donations to the NC Restaurant Workers Relief Fund. With additional donations from Thrive NC sponsors, paired with ticket refund donations and Blue Cross NC match, the total investment totaled to \$121,394 to the NC RWRF.

Tackling food security is a top priority for Blue Cross NC. In 2019 the company donated \$3 million to address this challenge. In addition, earlier this year Blue Cross NC made an [\\$8 million commitment](#) to address the unique challenges facing rural areas across the state, including food security.

In addition, the independent Blue Cross NC Foundation has responded to the COVID-19 crisis by allocating \$2 million in [rapid response funding](#) to support its grantees and other stakeholders working in communities across the state. The scope of the Foundation’s response will expand as the full impacts of the pandemic become more evident.

Improving Cash Flow for Members, Employers and Providers - \$275 million

Blue Cross NC is taking action to improve cash flow for members, employers and providers. The move is in response to financial challenges they are facing.

- **Extending grace period for members** on premium payments.

- **Extending grace period for employers** on premium payments.
- **Enhancing Blue Cross NC's claims payment processes** to speed payments, resulting in 90 percent of completed claims being paid within 14 days.
- **Reinforcing the health care workforce by speeding credentialing.**

These steps are in addition to other [support Blue Cross NC is offering](#) during the pandemic. These figures could increase or decrease depending on the length and severity of the pandemic. Blue Cross NC will continue to respond to this crisis to best serve its members and support doctors, nurses and hospitals.

More details can be found at www.BlueCrossNC.com/Coronavirus.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina:

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) is committed to making health care better, simpler and more affordable. We have been driving better health in North Carolina since 1933, working to tackle our communities' greatest health challenges. Blue Cross NC serves its customers and communities of more than 3.8 million members, including approximately 1.1 million on behalf of other Blue Plans. Blue Cross NC is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Visit Blue Cross NC online at www.bluecrossnc.com. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is an independent, private foundation with the mission of improving the health and well-being of everyone living in North Carolina. Since its establishment in 2000, the organization has invested \$143 million into North Carolina communities through more than 1,025 grants. In its grantmaking, the Foundation strives to address key drivers of health, and takes an approach designed to meet identified needs in partnership with the community. The organization also works closely with grantees and other nonprofits to support their growth through capacity building and leadership development opportunities. Blue Cross NC Foundation is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. For more information, visit www.bcbsncfoundation.org

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