



A nonprofit independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

## News release

For Immediate Release:

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## Excellus BlueCross BlueShield makes major donations to food banks and pantries as part of COVID-19 response

**Rochester, NY:** Excellus BlueCross Blue Shield is providing \$600,000 in financial support to food banks and food pantries across upstate New York as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The health plan has committed to spending more than \$162 million to help its members and communities fight the pandemic.

"The ability to earn a paycheck and feed a family are at risk for many people because of the coronavirus," said Excellus BCBS President and CEO-elect James Reed. "This is leading to a growing number of people in our community experiencing food insecurity. Good health begins with good food. We saw an opportunity to help by providing needed support to food banks and food pantries that are under pressure because of an increased need in our communities."

Food is the most basic of all needs. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, nearly 14 percent of New York households struggled with hunger, and at least 1 million New York children lived in households that did not have regular and consistent access to food, according to the New York State Anti-Hunger Task Force. Over the last few months, as New York State's unemployment rate increased, the ability for many families to regularly have food on the table was compromised. Local food banks and pantries are straining to meet the new demand.

The \$600,000 donation from Excellus BCBS will support food banks and food pantries across the nonprofit health insurer's 39 county upstate New York service area. In the Rochester region, that includes \$160,000 to support Foodlink, Inc. in its efforts to provide food for people in need.

"Foodlink is a proud partner of Excellus BlueCross BlueShield in our effort to help build healthier communities across Rochester and the Finger Lakes region," said Julia Tedesco, President & CEO of Foodlink. "Excellus BCBS understands the vital importance of food and nutrition in helping our region recover from this pandemic, and we're grateful for their significant investment in our ongoing response to this public health crisis."

This donation to food banks is part of a larger commitment by Excellus BCBS to spend more than \$162 million to help its members, health care providers and communities respond to the pandemic.

"We are a nonprofit health insurer with 3,500 employees who call upstate New York home," said Reed. "Improving the health and quality of life of our communities is what we're all about."

For the latest information on the health plan's response to the COVID-19 crisis, members, providers and employers are encouraged to visit <https://www.chooseexcellus.com/covid19>.

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*Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, is a nonprofit health plan with 1.5 million upstate New York members. The company's mission is to help people live healthier and more secure lives through access to high-quality, affordable health care. Its products and services include cost-saving prescription drug discounts, wellness tracking tools and access to telemedicine. With more than 3,500 employees, the company is committed to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce to foster innovation and better serve its members. It also encourages employees to engage in their communities by providing paid volunteer time off as one of many benefits. To learn more, visit [ExcellusBCBS.com](https://www.ExcellusBCBS.com).*