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**Contact**:

**New ‘Baltimore Health Corps’ to Hire and Train Hundreds of Jobless Residents to Serve Neighborhoods Hardest-Hit by COVID-19**

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*Innovative Pilot Program to Equitably Address City’s Public Health and Employment Challenges*

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*$12 Million Public-Private Partnership Mobilized by Initial $2M Commitment by The Rockefeller Foundation*

**BALTIMORE** | June 4, 2020 – Today, Mayor Bernard “Jack” Young, the Baltimore City Health Department, the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development, and The Rockefeller Foundation announced the launch of a groundbreaking pilot program – the Baltimore Health Corps –designed to address the city’s interconnected economic and public health crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Baltimore Health Corps will recruit, train, and employ more than 300 residents who are currently jobless during the pandemic to serve as contact tracers and care coordinators for Baltimore City residents. Health Corps staff will be deployed to address critical COVID-19 needs in Baltimore’s most vulnerable communities, performing three key functions: contact tracing, public health education outreach, and care coordination and social support.

“The Baltimore Health Corps is first-of-its-kind because it will target hiring individuals who have recently lost their jobs due to the pandemic and live in communities hardest hit by COVID-19 as community health workers, including those without previous healthcare experience,” **Mayor Young** said. “All 300+ members of the Baltimore Health Corps will receive a living wage and a stipend for health insurance to serve as full-time, trusted contact tracers and care coordinators in our communities. I am grateful to this extraordinary coalition of philanthropists and operating partners who have worked tirelessly to launch this groundbreaking model in Baltimore City.”

The Rockefeller Foundation committed an initial $2 million to the Baltimore Civic Fund for the pilot and is working with the City to recruit additional funding partners. The City has made a $4.5 million commitment to support this initiative, tapping into its CARES Act Funds. Additional private funders have contributed more than $2.3 million in support and include the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield (CareFirst), the France-Merrick Foundation, the Goldseker Foundation, OSI – Baltimore, the PepsiCo Foundation, the Rauch Foundation, the Stulman Foundation, and the T. Rowe Price Foundation,. The Baltimore City Health Department, Jhpiego, the Mayor’s Office for Employment Development, Baltimore Corps, HealthCare Access Maryland, and the Baltimore Civic Fund are partnering to operate the initiative. The total cost of the initiative is $12.4 million, and the City will continue to raise the remaining $3.5 million as the pilot gets underway.

“The Baltimore Health Corps is the type of collaborative and innovative solution that we need right now,” said **Dr. Rajiv J. Shah, President of The Rockefeller Foundation**. “By putting the community at the very core of this approach, the pilot will support the City’s public health and economic needs while serving as a model that can be adapted and scaled in cities across America.”

Over the course of 12 months, the Baltimore Health Corps will serve three core objectives:

1. **Job Creation and Skills Training:** The Baltimore Health Corps will onboard, and support hundreds of recently unemployed or out-of-work Baltimore residents in building careers as community health workers (CHWs). Community health is a growing field that bridges communities to healthcare services. Practitioners leverage trusted community relationships and shared life experience to improve access to care for vulnerable populations.

The field serves a critical need in Baltimore City, where health disparities are [closely linked to where residents live](http://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Health%20Disparities%20Report%20Card%20FINAL%2024-Apr-14.pdf) and life expectancies vary as much as 20 years by neighborhood. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that the field will grow 18% by 2026, providing sustainable employment opportunities and an increased demand for these careers.

The program will provide free community health worker training to prospective applicants so individuals without traditional health experience can qualify. Training for contact tracing will include a course funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies and developed by the Bloomberg School of Public Health that is now being used widely across the country. In addition, Baltimore City is partnering with Jhpiego, an international public health organization affiliated with Johns Hopkins University, to provide ongoing training in public health. Health Corps staff will be well-positioned for careers as community health workers at program conclusion, even if they have no previous experience in public health.

In addition, the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development will provide career navigation services to ensure staff obtain permanent employment after Baltimore Health Corps participation. Workforce supports will also include legal and mental health services to assist employees in overcoming barriers to employment. The city is recruiting 276 community health workers, including 38 supervisors, for these roles. In addition, there are 7 employment development, 7 managerial, and 10 administrative roles hiring now.

1. **Controlling the Spread of COVID-19**: In order to stop the spread of COVID-19, aggressive case investigation and contact tracing are needed in conjunction with support for individuals in self-isolation or self-quarantine. The Baltimore Health Corps will significantly expand the city’s existing contact tracing system, enabling the Baltimore City Health Department to reach communities with a depth of service not currently possible.

In addition to contact tracing, workers will also assist with public health outreach and education. In Baltimore, nearly 30% of households lack a home internet subscription, and proactive, creative messaging and outreach will be necessary to provide accurate information regarding COVID-19 and to build community trust. Deployment of CHWs into communities will start virtually and occur in-person only when safe to do so based on rates of community transmission and the availability of personal protective equipment.

1. **Serving the Social Needs of Baltimore’s Most Vulnerable**: Controlling the spread of COVID-19 is not limited to case investigation and contact tracing. It is also critical to provide social support to those impacted, including supporting individuals who are close contacts of cases to quarantine safely, creating housing options for people with COVID-19 who need to be isolated, and supporting families of ill and isolated residents. The Baltimore Health Corps will address the social needs of Baltimore’s most vulnerable populations such as older adults, those uninsured, and those who are pregnant and have young children through enhanced care coordination through existing nonprofit groups.

The Baltimore Health Corps will develop a core referral system for residents who are COVID-19 positive, a close contact, or need additional assistance during the pandemic. It will also develop a focused inventory of high-value COVID-19 essential service referral resources to empower care coordination services. Lastly, it will provide essential care coordination services for older adults, those uninsured, and those who are pregnant or have young children.

“To safely reopen, we need to scale contact tracing in our city,” Mayor Young said. “The Baltimore Health Corps will help us do just that. The Baltimore Health Corps will also aid our economic recovery. Unemployment claims have surged in our city because of the pandemic. The Baltimore Health Corps is a critical economic lifeline to those who have seen their employment prospects devastated by the spread of COVID-19. We know that so many city residents stand ready to serve as we confront and contain the spread of the virus. We welcome their service and look forward to getting more Baltimoreans back to work through this important effort.”

The Baltimore Health Corps is a centerpiece of the City’s strategy to support expanded employment opportunities and to reduce the spread of COVID-19 as Baltimore re-opens. Partners hope this program will serve as a national model for establishing a public works program to assist in the response and recovery from COVID-19.

The Baltimore Health Corps is hiring immediately. More information about the program can be found at [https://coronavirus.baltimorecity.gov/baltimore-health-corps](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcoronavirus.baltimorecity.gov%2Fbaltimore-health-corps&data=02%7C01%7C%7Ce7ce855c3574447f006608d806683414%7C312cb126c6ae4fc2800d318e679ce6c7%7C0%7C0%7C637266391907357425&sdata=YCxKTxXZZBOL6Bft4xJL3bjSikBWqXQmWde1cp%2BBzX8%3D&reserved=0), while those looking to apply can go to <https://www.baltimorecorps.org/baltimore-health-corps>.

“Over the next year, the Baltimore Health Corps will reach thousands of city residents every single day, providing critical support and care coordination to many of Baltimore’s most vulnerable communities and families with the ultimate aim of keeping us all safe,” **Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, Baltimore City Health Commissioner,** said. “The Baltimore Health Corps is a critical investment in our city’s public health infrastructure.”

"The Baltimore Health Corps will equitably recruit city residents who want to join our efforts to address this health crisis," **Mayor's Office of Employment Development Director Jason Perkins-Cohen** said. "The Baltimore Health Corps is a critical on-ramp to employment and career development for city residents, as well as a model for other cities to emulate. Over the span of the year-long initiative, health workers will have the opportunity to pursue a career in healthcare or transition to a job in another growth industry."

“HealthCare Access Maryland (HCAM) is thrilled to be a key partner involved in the Baltimore Health Corps initiative. HCAM’s mission has always been grounded in serving as the community’s safety net and we feel that our care coordination service and commitment to addressing social determinants of health is strongly in alignment with the role of the Baltimore Health Corps Initiative,” **HCAM CEO Traci Kodeck** said. “We are eager to continue to address the economic and public health crises and the critical COVID-19 needs in Baltimore’s most vulnerable communities.”

“Jhpiego --  a Johns Hopkins University affiliate and global health non-profit --  is honored to join with city leaders to help keep Baltimore families healthy and safe,” **Dr. Leslie Mancuso, Jhpiego’s President and CEO** said**.** “As we have for nearly 50 years and in more than 150 countries, Jhpiego will marshal our top experts in infectious diseases and our best practices to defeat the coronavirus in our home town.”

“We're thrilled to see this program go from conception to launch so quickly,” said **Dan Hymowitz, Director of the Mayor's Office of Performance & Innovation**. “We’re looking forward to analyzing data from the initiative during our COVID-Stat meetings and will track its measurable outcomes for Baltimore's health, safety, and economic recovery.”

"The coronavirus pandemic is hurting all of Baltimore, and it will take every part of the city coming together to make progress against it. That's why I'm so proud that this initiative is bringing together Baltimore City's government, private sector leaders, and nonprofits to fight the pandemic and to create new career pathways for our residents,” **Fagan Harris, CEO, Baltimore Corps said.** “This project critically recognizes the public health value in hiring residents who know and understand our hardest hit neighborhoods, and I am hopeful that our work here can be a model for other communities across the country.

“Communities of color have been hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic and job losses stemming from social-distancing measures,” said **Talib Horne, Baltimore Civic Site Director for the Annie E. Casey Foundation**. “We are glad to partner with the city and other philanthropic organizations to support a program that will help young people and families throughout Baltimore stay safe from the virus and create much-needed pathways for them to secure work and potentially launch careers.”

“The Baltimore Health Corps pilot is a groundbreaking initiative that will train and provide job opportunities for displaced and unemployed individuals while suppressing the spread of the virus,” said **Otis Rolley III, senior vice president of the U.S. Equity and Economic Opportunity Initiative, The Rockefeller Foundation.** “COVID-19 has triggered massive economic distress and a public health crisis that has disproportionately impacted vulnerable communities already facing systemic inequities, and our response must be scaled to meet their needs. Our team remains committed to supporting communities like Baltimore and encouraging investments that will give low-wage adult workers the stability they need to ensure a better and more equitable future.”

“Baltimore Health Corps is exactly the kind of innovative, impactful public-private partnership that OSI-Baltimore is looking to support in response to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said **Danielle Torain, director of OSI-Baltimore.** “The initiative is particularly crucial because it looks at the mid- and long-term impacts of COVID by promoting job creation and job access for populations of workers disproportionately marginalized from the job market.”

“As a company with hundreds of employees who live and work in Baltimore, we’ve seen the toll that COVID-19 has taken on this city,” said **Derek Lewis, President, South Division, PepsiCoBeverages North America**. “We’re dedicated to providing both immediate aid to our neighbors in need and long-term support for recovery in the wake of the virus. That’s why we are working with the Baltimore Health Corps to create 300 healthcare jobs to help conduct COVID-19 contract tracing and other critical community services. A crisis of this scale requires a collective response effort, and we’re proud to join Mayor Young and other partners to help the Baltimore community during this time.”

“CareFirst enthusiastically supports the Baltimore Health Corps’ essential and far-reaching efforts to minimize the disproportionate impact COVID-19 is having on vulnerable children, families, and communities,” said **Dr. Destiny-Simone Ramjohn**, **Vice President of Community Health and Social Impact at CareFirst.** “As a not-for-profit healthcare company, we are proud to be a partner in this innovative initiative because it applies an equity lens to address the root causes of poor health and is well positioned to drive positive, measurable impact on communities’ health and wellbeing.”