



Contact:

Julia Kersey

[Julia.kersey@heart.org](mailto:Julia.kersey@heart.org) / 312-476-6684

Colleen Miller

[Colleen\\_Miller@bcbsil.com](mailto:Colleen_Miller@bcbsil.com) / 312-653-6904

## **NEW AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION SOCIAL IMPACT FUND TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY HEALTH IN CHICAGO**

***Fund supported by \$1 million investment from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois***

CHICAGO, May 1, 2019 --The American Heart Association today announced the launch of the Social Impact Fund in Chicago, supported by a \$1 million investment from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois. The Social Impact Fund will empower communities to change their own trajectory of health and well-being by addressing issues of economic growth, healthy food access, housing and educational opportunity. The fund will focus its efforts on Chicago's West and South sides, relying on the community's knowledge of what is needed to deliver impactful solutions.

Expressions of interest for the first funding cycle will be accepted at <https://ahacommunityfunding.fluxx.io> through June 16, 2019. Entrepreneurs, businesses and organizations living and working in underserved areas who are creating and implementing thoughtful, local solutions to the challenges faced by the community are encouraged to apply. Funding for the initial investment cycle is \$300,000, which will be distributed to between three and eight applicants.

According to the [County Health Rankings](#), only 20% of a person's overall health is determined by clinical medical care, while the rest is determined by social and economic factors and physical environment, referred to as social determinants of health.

"Social determinants can have a profound influence on a person's health, particularly as it relates to heart disease. If you don't have access to healthy food or a safe place to exercise, your heart health suffers," said Lisa Hinton, American Heart Association Market Vice President. "To truly change health outcomes in Chicago, we need to work alongside the community to reduce disparities and ensure everyone has the chance to reach their full health potential. We are grateful to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois for its transformational gift in support of our work."

While significant advances have been made in cardiovascular disease prevention and treatment, the health results are disparate across economic, racial and ethnic groups. Through the Social Impact Fund, the American Heart Association hopes to engage Chicagoans in creating innovative solutions that will significantly improve health and life expectancy in their communities. The Association will convene key partners who are committed to helping individuals and families live longer including community members, social service organizations, business leaders, civic leaders, local health systems and public health organizations.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL) is providing funding for the AHA's Social Impact Fund as part of the company's broader efforts to impact the issues that are keeping health care out of reach for many people. BCBSIL and Blues plans in Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Montana have launched [Affordability Cures](#) to accelerate new and existing efforts to find solutions with staying power to increase access to reduce health care costs.

"We know that social factors such as income, education, housing, discrimination, access to transportation and violence are keeping people from being their healthiest selves," says Dr. Derek Robinson, chief medical officer for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois. "Supporting the Social Impact Fund is one way we're looking to improve the health of our communities beyond the walls of hospitals and physician offices."

#### **About the American Heart Association**

The American Heart Association is devoted to saving people from heart disease and stroke – the two leading causes of death in the world. We team with millions of volunteers to fund innovative research, fight for stronger public health policies, and provide lifesaving tools and information to prevent and treat these diseases. The Dallas-based association is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke.

#### **About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois**

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL) is committed to expanding access to quality, cost-effective health care to as many people as possible in Illinois. BCBSIL is dedicated to innovation and exploring, nurturing and activating future possibilities to make the health care system work better for our members and our communities. BCBSIL is a division of Health Care Service Corporation, a Mutual Legal Reserve Company and an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

####