

Good Afternoon,

I am sure that you are all aware of the potential change in how the district provides health insurance to employees by joining a Joint Purchase Group (JPG) rather than remaining self-insured by ourselves. That change by itself is a big one for the District. The bigger change, and the most concerning one that I have heard from members is this would also mean changing providers – moving from Blue Cross/Blue Shield network to the Harvard Pilgrim network. As with anything, there are pros and cons to this change – just as there were three years ago when the District made the change of no longer offering Fallon Health Insurance in the District. That change allowed the District Health Insurance Trust Fund to move from a \$250K deficit to a \$1.8M surplus in two years. I believe that this change can have the same sort of positive impact for the District and its employees.

First, let me explain a bit about the Harvard Pilgrim Network that we would access. Our plan would be administered by HPI, which is an arm of Harvard Pilgrim which is setup to deal with entities that are self-insured, such as ourselves or the JPG. That is why their quoted administration fees are so much lower (38%) than we currently pay. **We will not be on a Harvard Pilgrim plan – we will be on a plan of our own design which is administered by HPI and uses the Harvard Pilgrim Network (in Massachusetts, Maine and New Hampshire) as well as the United Healthcare Network (in the other 47 states).** With some plans, hospitals and doctors are broken out into tiers, and members can only see those who they are allowed to see based on those tiers. That will not be the case for us. As this has been a concern raised a number of times I'd like to repeat that:

Our plan will not have the tiers associated with some other plans

I believe this has been a source of confusion for many employees who have heard from family, friends and neighbors who have a plan with tiers. **Our plan is different and is not restricted in any way, other than the provider needing to accept the Harvard Pilgrim Network, just as currently the provider needs to accept the BC/BS Network.** Our claims will be processed by HPI, who will play the same roles as BC/BS does in processing our claims currently.

Secondly, based on the desire to answer and address any questions and concerns members have about this potential change, the District deadline for a decision has been extended until April 10. This will allow us to hold two additional information meetings in hopes of answering any questions you may have about either aspect of this potential change. If you have any questions or concerns you want to express, please plan to attend these meetings. If you know of a retired employee who has questions or concerns about this potential change, please let them know of these meetings. While April 3 is geared towards active members and April 8 geared towards retirees, anyone is welcome at either meeting. A mailing will be sent to all retired members regarding the April 8, 2019 meeting.

When: April 3, 2019 – 3:30PM

Where: Dudley Middle School - Cafeteria

Who: Primary focus is for active employees, but anyone is welcome

When: April 8, 3:00PM

Where: Shepherd Hill Regional High School - Auditorium

Who: Primary focus is for retired employees, but anyone is welcome

On March 1 Mary Ellen Cerbone reached out to all staff via email with a memo from me attached. I have attached that memo to this email, and updated it with links to a presentation made by HPI and links to allow you to check on your health care providers' acceptance of Harvard Pilgrim insurance. Also attached to this email is the PowerPoint presentation from HPI, the PowerPoint presentation distributed at previous meetings, and a Frequently Asked Questions document.

Change is challenging. Change without absolute certainty is more challenging. Due to the timing of the retiree Medex plan (Jan-Dec, not July-June) we are not able to bid the retiree Medex plan until summer. This is stressful for people. I wish there was something that could be done about that but there is not. However it is my understanding based on last night's discussion that if School Committee votes to make this change, part of that language of the vote will be to specify that plan design must be the same. This is the best commitment the District can make at this time.

I appreciate you taking the time to read through this email. I am more than happy to address and questions or concerns you may have individually. I am still a relatively new member to the Dudley-Charlton family and have no desire to introduce change for change's sake. I see this change as progress and evolution, not simply change. The District is looking at this move to allow us to offer the same benefits, if not improved with such things as telemedicine and specific disease care management, for the same price or less.

Respectfully,

Richard Mathieu