

For Immediate Release

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Common Health Coalition Launches Inaugural Common Health Challenge to Champion Catalysts for Change

Critical importance of Community Health Worker partnerships across health care and public health organizations spotlighted

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CALL TO ACTION FOR U.S. HEALTH LEADERS

NEW YORK (December 9, 2024) – The [Common Health Coalition](#), a not-for-profit whose mission is to improve the country’s health system through innovative partnerships between health care and public health, today kicked off its inaugural **Common Health Challenge - Community Health Workers: Catalysts for a Reimagined Health System** with a free virtual event from 1p.m. – 2:30 p.m. ET.

The [Common Health Challenge](#) is an annual call to action for [Common Health Coalition members](#) and partners to rally around a critical health system-wide issue that strengthens collaboration across health care and public health systems. [Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc.](#), chair of the Common Health Coalition, made the announcement.

“The Common Health Coalition aims to advance meaningful Community Health Worker initiatives across the U.S. through partnership between healthcare and public health. We are launching this initiative to empower all Coalition members to take action by providing them with knowledge and guidance about how to better integrate Community Health Workers into their organizational efforts,” said Chokshi. “The inaugural Common Health Challenge spotlights Community Health Workers as trusted professionals who build bridges between clinical, public health, and community organizations to facilitate access to services and improve health.”

The event featured panels with leading voices across health care and public health; a call to action to join the Challenge and recognize Community Health Workers (CHWs) as catalysts for change; and details for the 2025 Catalyst Award program.

Speakers at today’s event included:

- [Elisa Arespachaga, MBA](#), vice president, American Hospital Association Physician Alliance
- [Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc](#), chair, Common Health Coalition & former Health Commissioner of NYC
- [Bechara Choucair, MD](#), executive vice president and chief health officer, Kaiser Permanente
- [Philip Cooper, CCHW, CPSS](#), chief change agent, Operation Gateway Inc.
- [Aurora GrantWingate, MPH](#), member and partner engagement manager, National Association of Community Health Workers
- [Mat Gulick, MA](#), director of communications, Alliance of Community Health Plans
- [Olusimbo \(Simbo\) Ige, MD, MS, MPH](#), commissioner, Chicago Department of Health

- [Shreya Kangovi, MD, MSPH](#), chief executive officer, IMPaCT Care
- [Rishi Manchanda, MD, MPH](#), chief executive officer, HealthBegins

To learn how to join the Challenge, nominate or apply for a Catalyst Award, visit CommonHealthCoalition.org/challenge. To view an archived video of the event, visit [The Coalition's YouTube page](#).

“From patient care to education, from social service enrollment to disease prevention -- community health workers play a critical role in keeping our communities healthy and connected,” said Bechara Choucair, MD, executive vice president and chief health officer, Kaiser Permanente. “I believe this inaugural initiative can strengthen and spread this powerful model to more communities nationwide. The Common Health Challenge will pave the way for a better public health and health care system for all.”

The Common Health Challenge will support communities throughout the U.S. in stewarding locally driven, collaborative CHWs programs. These programs will advance the Coalition’s focus on health care and public health collaboration, and the goal of improving community health; increasing preparedness and value across local healthcare and public health systems and reinforcing the impact of health care and public health professionals.

“Community Health Workers have long been catalysts for change, driving innovation and demonstrating unwavering commitment to overcoming barriers in healthcare access, quality, and trust for over six decades. With their unique ability to connect communities to the healthcare system, CHWs have pioneered transformative solutions, addressed healthcare disparities and fostered trust where it is most needed. Despite more than proven their value, CHWs still face a lack of respect, protection, and authentic partnership—critical elements to sustain our leadership and impact. NACHW looks forward to collaborating with members of the Common Health Coalition who recognize CHWs as professionals and are dedicated to fostering greater integration and partnership to eliminate healthcare barriers,” said Denise Octavia Smith, CHW and Inaugural Executive Director of the National Association of Community Health Workers.

At the Challenge kickoff, the Common Health Coalition also announced the Catalyst Award program, for which the [nomination process](#) begins today and runs through January 24, 2025. The Catalyst Awards will be given to at organizations that share learnings and best practices from their own work, inform the core pillars of sustainable community compacts, and advance stronger partnerships between health care and public health within their current programs. The organizations must demonstrate a strong capacity to integrate Community Health Workers in ways that strengthen partnerships between health care and public health in communities.

Ten organizations will receive a monetary Catalyst Award in Spring 2025. For an FAQ on the Catalyst Award program, visit this link [here](#).

“Community health workers are a key bridge between healthcare, public health, social services, and the communities they serve. This trusted workforce helps individuals and families navigate these systems, connect people to services, and address barriers to achieving optimal health. Healthcare, public health, and policymakers should take action to strengthen and integrate community health workers into their strategies to improve community health and advance health equity,” said J. Nadine Gracia, MD, MSCE, president and chief executive officer, Trust for America’s Health.

“APHA has long supported community health workers and the important role they play in building trusted relationships with their local community to advance public health. We are thrilled to see the Common Health Coalition launch its inaugural Challenge focused on such a critical component of the health system it aims to improve,” said Dr. Georges C. Benjamin, MD, executive director of the American Public Health Association.

“ACHP is proud to support the Common Health Challenge as a founding member of the Common Health Coalition. Our member health plans are committed to delivering value-based care and know that strong partnerships between health care and public health are essential to that. Community Health Workers are vital in connecting patients and community members with services related to social determinants of health and are well-positioned to drive improved outcomes at the intersection of health care and public health,” said Dan Jones, senior vice president, Federal Affairs, Alliance of Community Health Plans.

“Community health workers play a vital role within many hospitals and health systems, serving as important connectors between providers and communities that have been underserved,” said Michelle Hood, executive vice president and chief operating officer of the American Hospital Association. “By increasing collaboration and communication throughout the health care system, community health workers are expanding and bridging access to care, supporting patient outcomes, and increasing cultural competence and health knowledge.”

The Common Health Coalition was founded by five leading health care organizations — AHIP, the Alliance of Community Health Plans, the American Hospital Association, the American Medical Association, and Kaiser Permanente — to ensure the U.S. health system is ready to confront the next crisis via strengthened partnerships between health care and public health. This is being done by collaboration between the U.S. health care and public health systems, and by translating the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic into lessons mobilized for action. In addition to shining a spotlight on exemplary organizations and work — particularly those at the state and local level — the Coalition offers technical assistance in the form of webinars, tools, network building, and case studies to help member organizations advance partnerships between health care and public health.

"The Institute for Public Health Innovation is a proud core partner of the Common Health Coalition, and we are happy to see the Coalition focus on the critical issue of Community Health Worker (CHW) integration," said Michael Rhein, president & chief executive officer of Institute for Public Health Innovation (IPHI). "CHWs are an essential part of the health system, and this Challenge will help bring additional attention, resources, and energy to bolstering and highlighting CHWs' long-standing role in improving health outcomes across the country."

"Community Health Workers (CHWs) are the missing link to advancing a health system that meets people where they are at. So far, we have underestimated and underinvested in the leadership role CHWs can play in connecting healthcare, public health, and community to advance health equity. The Common Health Challenge is an invitation to challenge ourselves as a nation to make a sustained investment in these natural community catalysts, to learn from communities who are already showing what is possible, and to advance shared policy together," said Somava Saha, MD MS, president and chief executive officer, Well-being and Equity (WE) in the World.

“Community Health Workers are unsung heroes of the health system in the United States and abroad,” said Raj Panjabi, senior partner at Flagship Pioneering and associate physician at Mass General Brigham. “I am thrilled to see the Common Health Coalition focus its inaugural Challenge on Community Health Workers and recognize them as essential drivers of health outcomes and trust. Now is the time for health leaders to support Community Health Worker integration and take action to drive stronger partnerships, equity, and overall system resilience.”

“Community Health Workers are essential caregivers, navigators and advocates for their communities. In our experience across the United States, expanded investment in and profession recognition for CHWs can be transformative in improving the health of patients today, while strengthening public health infrastructure and policy for the future. PIH is thrilled that the Common Health Coalition has chosen to elevate its focus on this critical workforce at this critical time through the inaugural Common Health Challenge. We believe that Community Health Workers are essential to building a more equitable and just future in the United States in

which everyone can exercise their right to health,” said Katie Bollbach, executive director, Partners in Health United States.

The Common Health Challenge will advance the Coalition’s goal to identify, amplify and replicate the innovations already happening across the country and create a movement of organizations committed to doing away with existing siloes that hinder progress and expanding effective work happening at the intersection of health care and public health. The annual Common Health Challenge is made possible with expert advising from the National Association of Community Health Workers and HealthBegins.

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About The Common Health Coalition

The Common Health Coalition: *Together for Public Health* brings together leading health organizations in pursuit of a reimagined health system: one in which the nation’s health care and public health systems no longer work in parallel, but hand in hand – with better health for all as the common goal. The Coalition’s founding members are the Alliance of Community Health Plans, AHIP, American Hospital Association, American Medical Association, and Kaiser Permanente. Former New York City Commissioner of Health Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc, chairs the Coalition, and Chelsea Cipriano, MPH, serves as its managing director. Our work is informed by an advisory council of public health leaders chaired by Georges C. Benjamin, MD, Executive Director of the American Public Health Association, and J. Nadine Gracia, MD, MSCE, President and CEO of Trust for America’s Health. The Common Health Coalition is hosted by the Institute for Public Health Innovation, a non-profit that builds cross-sector partnerships, promotes health equity, and works to create effective public health systems and policies that foster healthy communities. To sign up for the newsletter or learn more, visit commonhealthcoalition.org and follow on [LinkedIn](#).

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Jennifer A. Maguire, jen@maguirepr.com

Diane Stefani, diane.stefani19@gmail.com