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Local Legislators Present \$200,000 Check from State to Public Health Institute for 413Cares Resource Portal

Springfield, MA – Local legislators presented a **\$200,000 check from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts (PHIWM)** to support its 413Cares initiative, which connects people with the critical resources they need in an online portal. The event took place at PHIWM offices, 127 State Street in Springfield.

[Photo attached, L-R: PHIWM Policy Director Andrea Freeman; PHIWM Project Coordinator Beyonca Twiggs; Kim Savery, Director, Community Programs and Family Support Services with the Hilltown Community Health Center; Frank Robinson, Vice President of Community Relations and Public Health at Baystate Health; Representative Michael Finn; Sarita Hudson, PHIWM Senior Director of Strategy and Development; Senator Adam Gomez; Jaymie Zapata, Senior Planner with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission; PHIWM Executive Director Jessica Collins (in blue); Ana Jaramillo, Program Supervisor, Holyoke Health Center; PHIWM Board Member Luz Lopez; Liv Anna Homstead, PHIWM Coalition Building Manager; Representative Carlos Gonzalez; Kevin Chambers, Aide to Senator John Velis; and Debra DiStefano, Chief People & Equity Officer for the Hilltown Community Health Center.]

The check presentation was attended by State Senator Adam Gomez, State Representatives Michael Finn and Carlos Gonzalez, and an aide representing Senator John Velis, along with representatives from organizations partnering with the Public Health Institute on the 413Cares initiative.

The funding was secured for 413Cares in the FY2024 state budget as the result of a legislative earmark, sponsored by Representative Finn and Senator Gomez. Funding was secured through the Department of Public Health.

According to Representative Finn, “413Cares has truly modernized and expanded how residents access resources here in Western Massachusetts. Their easy-to-use and central location provides information about countless different programs - dramatically simplifying a once daunting task for those seeking help. I am proud to have joined my colleagues to support this invaluable asset for our region in the FY24 Budget.”

"It was my pleasure to advocate for this earmark alongside my colleagues in government which will support the 413Cares centralized database of community services in Western Massachusetts, brought to you by the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts," said Senator Gomez.

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PHI Check Presentation

"Western Mass is a large and diverse region in the Commonwealth with residents who face equally diverse issues. I look forward to the continual support of 413Cares' implementation of an integrative approach to community services."

Launched in 2019 by PHIWM with the support of Baystate Health, [413Cares.org](https://www.413cares.org) is an online community resource database for Western Massachusetts. The platform has reached more than 100,000 searches and over 111,000 interactions with programs in the region. Top searches were for housing, food resources and health-related resources.

PHIWM has received funding from the Commonwealth in the past two legislative budgeting cycles to support 413Cares, which is managed by PHIWM. Resources from the State have been used to collect data during and after the pandemic and have also been utilized to improve and update the 413Cares.org website, and raise awareness of the resource in the region.

Due to promoting awareness of the portal and building partnerships made possible by the state funding, in 2023 413Cares saw a 234% increase in website traffic over the previous year, and a sharp increase in referrals through the website to community-based organizations. Feedback from users on the platform indicated that they found the services they need 71% of the time.

This year, the state resources are funding three new regional partners to provide outreach, promotion and support of the platform: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Quaboag Hills Community Coalition, and the Hilltown Community Health Center. This is in addition to existing regional partner Community Action Pioneer Valley, funded by Baystate Health.

According to Senator Jake Oliveira, "We're very fortunate in Western Mass to have an array of agencies that provide essential resources in times of need. But those searching for that support can't always access it. I'm grateful to have a partner in 413Cares working to address that missed connection and empowering individuals and families to get the assistance they need."

The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts was formed over 20 years ago with the goal of using data and its convening power to create collaborative partnerships in building a public health system through a health equity lens. The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts is building this through community engagement, collaborative partnerships, research and evaluation, and policy advocacy.