

Bloomberg Philanthropies Announces \$600 Million Gift to Historically Black Medical Schools

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire

In a monumental move to address the underrepresentation of Black physicians in the United States, Bloomberg Philanthropies has announced a \$600 million donation to the endowments of four historically Black medical schools. Officials said the donation is part of Bloomberg Philanthropies' Greenwood Initiative, which aims to advance racial wealth equity and address systemic underinvestment in Black institutions and communities.

Howard University College of Medicine, Meharry Medical College, and Morehouse School of Medicine will each

receive \$175 million, while Charles R. Drew University of Medicine & Science will receive \$75 million. Additionally, Bloomberg said \$5 million in seed funding will support creating a new historically Black medical school in New Orleans, the Xavier Ochsner College of Medicine. The historic investment will more than double the endowments of three medical schools, significantly boosting their financial stability and capacity to educate future Black physicians.

A recent study highlighted the need for such support, revealing that only 5.7% of U.S. physicians identify as Black or African American. This is despite Black Americans comprising 13% of

the population. According to research, treating black patients by black doctors results in better health outcomes and more frequent medical care. For instance, Black patients are 34% more likely to receive preventative care if they see Black doctors.

The four historically Black medical schools receiving funding reportedly graduate around half of all Black doctors in the U.S. but have been traditionally underfunded due to systemic inequities, including lower federal and state support. Since the early 1900s, discriminatory practices and the impacts of the Flexner Report have led to the closure of 10 Black medical schools



Howard University

in the United States. The financial boost from Bloomberg Philanthropies should have a transformative impact.

Michael Bloomberg, the former New York City mayor, Democratic presidential candidate, and founder of Bloomberg LP, will formally announce the donation at the National Medical Association's annual convention. "This gift will empower new generations of Black doctors to create a healthier and more equitable future for our country," Bloomberg said.

In 2020, Bloomberg Philanthropies granted \$100 million to these same medical schools to reduce the debt load of enrolled students facing severe financial burdens exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Valerie Montgomery Rice, president of Morehouse School of Medicine, noted that the 2020 gift relieved an average of \$100,000 in debt for each student, significantly enhancing the school's ability to fundraise and support its students.

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OHA Releases Strategic Plan to Eliminate Health Inequities

The Skanner News

Today, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) released its 2024-2027 strategic plan – becoming the first state health agency in the nation to declare a goal to eliminate health inequities, and to outline a comprehensive plan for progress, by 2030.

Health inequities are the differences that exist in health outcomes for certain groups driven by unfair structural barriers in different groups. These differences are based on social, economic and other factors – such as systemic racism, bias, discrimination and oppression embedded into every aspect of society – that have a direct impact on health but are beyond one person's control. They include gaps in health coverage, lack of access to providers, food and housing insecurity, income inequalities, student achievement gaps and other issues that contribute to higher rates of health problems in different communities.

Race and geography affect lifespan and overall well-being of people in Oregon. Data show that Black/African American, American Indian and Alaska Native people in Oregon have shorter life expectancies than White residents. People living in rural areas face barriers including higher rates of depression, diabetes, and cardiovas-

cular disease yet have fewer options for care.

OHA's strategic plan is focused on eliminating health inequities and creating a future where all people in Oregon have equal opportunity to thrive.

To this end, OHA is pursuing progress across five key pillars that represent some of the biggest challenges facing Oregonians and OHA:

- Transforming behavioral health by building the behavioral health workforce to serve all people, particularly those who experience health inequities; expanding access to community-based services, preventive services for youth and children, and medication to reverse overdose; and improving public transparency and accountability for funds received, among other strategies.
- Strengthening access to affordable care for all by connecting all people to affordable health coverage; improving network adequacy; and reducing the number of people delaying or going without care because it's too expensive, inconvenient, or not available in the right language, among other strategies.
- Fostering healthy families and environments by ensuring that more pregnancies are safe and healthy; reduc-

ing hospital visits and deaths related to wildfire smoke; lowering rates of childhood lead poisoning; and closing immunization disparities, among other strategies.

- Achieving healthy Tribal communities by working with Oregon's Nine Federally Recognized Tribes to improve the health of Tribal members.
- Building OHA's internal capacity and commitment to eliminate health inequities by improving OHA's responsiveness to the community and partners; authentically involving communities in policy and program decisions; and growing the diversity of OHA's staff so our workforce more closely mirrors the communities we serve.

The plan was informed by years of community input, and staff engagement shaped OHA's strategies and actions. To accomplish the plan's goals, state health officials will convene community leaders and partner organizations from a wide range of communities in every part of the state.

State health officials will track and report on the agency's progress through an online dashboard of metrics and an annual public report that describes the successes and challenges OHA faces working toward its 2030 goal.

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