



For immediate release:

Contact: Bridget Scrimenti  
(508) 870-0312 x 256

MASSACHUSETTS BROADBAND INSTITUTE, MASSACHUSETTS E-HEALTH INSTITUTE, STATE SENATOR BEN DOWNING, AND BERKSHIRE HEALTH SYSTEMS DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE IN BERKSHIRE COUNTY

PITTSFIELD – September 12, 2011 – Massachusetts Broadband Institute and Massachusetts e-Health Institute officials joined State Senator Ben Downing and members of Berkshire Health Systems today to meet with health care providers and administrators at Berkshire Medical Center to discuss the state’s efforts to accelerate e-health initiatives and expand broadband access. The Massachusetts e-Health Institute (MeHI) is working with over 100 health care providers in Berkshire County to speed the adoption of electronic health records, networked through a secure statewide health information exchange.

The Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) is building the *MassBroadband 123* fiber-optic network, which will extend high-speed Internet access to communities and provide broadband infrastructure connections to medical facilities. Under the leadership of Governor Patrick, the MBI was awarded \$45.4 million in federal stimulus funding to develop the *MassBroadband 123* network. Both initiatives are critical to advance health care technology and improve the quality of patient care in western Massachusetts.

“Today’s event was an excellent opportunity for health care professionals to meet directly with experts on broadband and e-health,” noted Downing. “As the Commonwealth continues to strive toward its goal of achieving universal broadband access, it is also important for western Massachusetts to prepare for its many benefits, such as the adoption of e-health technologies. Today’s conversation was helpful and I greatly appreciate MBI and MeHI’s willingness to spend time in the Berkshires today.”

The Patrick-Murray Administration has made adopting health information technology a top priority as part of the next phase of health care reform, to improve patient care and reduce costs. Under the leadership of the administration, MeHI was awarded close to \$30 million in federal stimulus funding for electronic health records and health information exchange.

“The acceleration of e-health technologies will create a safer and more efficient health care delivery system in the Commonwealth,” said Rick Shoup, Ph.D., State HIT Coordinator and Director of the Massachusetts e-Health Institute. “We’re helping health care providers throughout the state to successfully adopt electronic health records, leading to a higher quality of care and better outcomes for patients.”

The MBI’s *MassBroadband 123* fiber-optic network project will expand broadband access to more than 120 communities in western and north central Massachusetts. The 1,300 mile Internet backbone network will attract private investment and job opportunities, help local governments deliver services more efficiently, and will provide direct connections to nearly 1,400 schools, libraries, public safety facilities and hospitals, including Berkshire Medical Center.

“The MBI is committed to bringing affordable broadband access that will strengthen our health care system and connect medical professionals with 21st century technology,” said MBI Director Judy Dumont. “We will continue to make significant and timely progress to build the *MassBroadband 123* network and connect the unconnected.”

MeHI is working with over 2,500 physicians across Massachusetts, including health care providers affiliated with Berkshire Health Systems and other providers in Berkshire County, to accelerate the adoption of electronic health records and achieve federal meaningful use guidelines to fully utilize the functions and benefits of an electronic health record system. As one of 60 federally-designated Regional Extension Centers across the country, MeHI offers vendors and services to help health care providers successfully implement an electronic health record system and meet meaningful use criteria.

“Patients and health care providers in Berkshire County will benefit greatly from the expansion of broadband access and the adoption of e-health technologies,” said David E. Phelps, President and CEO of Berkshire Health Systems. “BHS has been a regional leader in the development and implementation of a comprehensive Electronic Health Record system. In partnership with MBI and MeHI, we are developing a strategy to meaningfully use health information technology to further enhance patient centered care.”

MeHI is establishing a secure statewide health information exchange to connect electronic health record systems across the state, and allow health care providers in the Commonwealth to electronically transmit key clinical, prescription, lab and other health care data. The statewide health information exchange will provide both patients and health care providers with more timely and accurate information to enable critical health care decision making.