



WNY to lead with health info technology

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BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - **RELEASE:** Today, Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-27) announced that Western New York's own HEALTHeLINK program was selected as one of 15 communities out of 130 applicants nationwide to serve as pilot communities for eventual wide-scale use of health information technology. With this selection, HEALTHeLINK—a coalition that includes WCA Hospital, Catholic Health System, ECMC, BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York, Independent Health, Kaleida Health, Roswell Park Cancer Institute, and Univera Healthcare—has been awarded a \$16.1 million ultra-competitive Beacon Grant to implement electronic health record reforms, the largest grant awarded.

"Achieving more affordable, patient-focused, higher quality health care starts with implementing innovative initiatives such as HEALTHeLINK," said Congressman Higgins. "Electronic health records will improve the quality of care patients receive, create better integrated health systems, and will ultimately reduce unnecessary costs. Simply put, doctors will be focused on patients not paperwork—a reform that we can all agree with."

With this grant, Western New York is leading the way for innovative health care practices. In total, \$220 million in Recovery Act awards will go towards funding these pilot communities. The \$16.1 million for HEALTHeLINK aims to spur:

Coordination amongst healthcare providers. This program calls for aggressive coordination of health information technology with the majority of WNY's doctors and hospitals that provide diabetes care, ultimately improving the quality of care diabetes patients receive and decrease unnecessary costs.

·Reduction of unnecessary costs and visits. The technology that will be implemented is aimed at reducing unnecessary emergency room admissions and readmissions due to diabetes and pneumonia and provide doctors with the tools to better monitor patients with complex diseases in order to improve outcomes.

Integration amongst the WNY Health Community HEALTHeLINK is working with the P2 Collaborative and the entire WNY Health Community in this effort – all relevant stakeholders have "bought in" to this concept.

In step with the Recovery Act, this major investment in health care will create dozens of new jobs and accelerate national health IT infrastructure for future employment of thousands of Americans. It is part of the Recovery Act's \$2 billion investment bring the use of electronic health records for every person in the United States by 2014.

In February, Congressman Higgins announced the award of Recovery Act Health Information Technology Regional Extension Center funding for Western New York, including Jamestown and Chautauqua County. The Congressman is also working to ensure that WNY hospitals and physicians are able to fully utilize billions of dollars in Recovery Act incentives for the purchase of health information technology software and equipment in all healthcare settings that will become available in 2011.

Additional information:

- About HEALTHeLINK: <http://www.wnyhealthelink.com/>
- About Beacon Communities can be found at: <http://Healthit.hhs.gov/Programs/Beacon>
- About other HHS Recovery Act programs: <http://www.hhs.gov/recovery>