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Statement by Lora Pellegrini, President and CEO of the Massachusetts Association of Health Plans, on the Health Policy Commission’s setting of the Massachusetts Cost Growth Benchmark for 2026

Today, the Health Policy Commission voted to set the 2026 Cost Growth Benchmark at 3.6%. The Massachusetts Association of Health Plans (MAHP) applauds this vote and strongly supports the continued use of the benchmark as a vital tool to promote accountability and control rising health care costs.

The latest data show health care spending in Massachusetts grew by 8.6% from 2022 to 2023—more than double the benchmark. This spike was driven by a 10% increase in net pharmacy spending and a \$1.1 billion surge in hospital outpatient costs. These rising costs are directly fueling higher premiums for employers and consumers.

For too long, health plans have shouldered the burden of cost containment while pharmaceutical manufacturers and hospital systems have operated without meaningful guardrails. That must change.

We are at a critical juncture. To make health care more affordable and sustainable, the state must hold all players—plans, providers, and drug manufacturers—accountable to the same standard. The benchmark must be more than a number; it must be a shared commitment.

MAHP and our member plans stand ready to do our part. We urge the Commonwealth to act decisively to ensure that every stakeholder helps rein in spending and deliver on the promise of affordability for all Massachusetts residents.

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