



BOSTON COLLEGE  
**CENTER FOR CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP**  
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## Letter From the CEO

If there is a chain, it is not a strong one. The weakest link, in fact, is also the one that is most likely to break. It is not a health care system, and not a health care industry, that is most dependent?

–Maya Angelou, “Even the Stars Look Lonesome”



Dear Fellow Corporate Leaders,

As the Chair of the Health Equity BCCCC Advisory Board, I am writing to you today to emphasize the paramount importance of health equity and health justice in our society. It is our collective responsibility as business leaders to prioritize these critical issues and take meaningful action to address the disparities that persist in our society.

Health equity is the principle that everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health, regardless of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or any other social determinant. Unfortunately, systemic inequalities have led to significant disparities in health outcomes, with marginalized communities often bearing the brunt of these inequities. This is not only a moral imperative but also a business imperative, as a healthier workforce contributes to increased productivity, reduced health care costs, and overall economic growth.

Moreover, investing in community health is essential for both business success and community cohesion. When communities are healthy and thriving, businesses benefit from a more stable and prosperous operating context. Healthy communities foster a sense of belonging, trust, and collaboration, which are vital for building strong relationships between businesses and the communities 22.1 (i)-5.1 (n)-5m bd

Health justice, on the other hand, recognizes that achieving health equity requires addressing the root causes of these disparities, including social, economic, and environmental factors. It calls for the active dismantling of oppressive systems and the promotion of policies and practices that prioritize the health and well-being of all individuals, particularly those who have been historically marginalized. Business leaders from ALL industries have a voice on these matters and a role to play in resolving them.

By prioritizing health equity and health justice, we not only fulfill our moral obligation to create a more just and equitable society but also position our companies for long-term success. This advisory bulletin is intended to provide helpful information and food for thought about how you might address these important issues. I urge you to join us in this critical mission and take concrete steps to embed these principles into your corporate strategies and practices.

Together, we can build a future where everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

Sincerely,

**CHRISTY REEVES**

Chair, Advisory Board on Health Equity  
Vice President, Community Engagement and Impact,  
Ochsner Health

# Insights

Health inequities have emerged as one of the most pressing challenges faced by societies worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic brought the inequities in our world into sharp focus, highlighting the disproportionate impact on marginalized and underserved communities. Health inequities are systemic differences in health outcomes and well-being across various populations, of en

factors that influence health outcomes, it becomes crucial to examine the complex interplay between corporate practices and population health. By understanding the business case for health equity and the various levers they can pull to promote change, companies across all sectors can contribute to creating a more equitable and healthier future for all.



# Massachusetts

# How Social Determinants of Health Affect Commercial Determinants of Health

The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people grow, live, and work, along with the policies in place to deal with illness and the distribution of resources that shape the conditions of life. Commercial determinants of health are a key social determinant and refer to the conditions, actions, and omission by commercial actors that affect health.<sup>4</sup> This framework highlights the central role of companies in shaping health outcomes and recognizing their influence on various aspects of health, such as access to health care, nutrition, environmental conditions, and social determinants. By acknowledging their impact, companies can develop targeted strategies to mitigate negative health consequences and contribute to the well-being of the communities they serve.

For companies eager to increase their trust ForcneFori5H



needed to address the underlying causes of health inequities.

To effectively address health inequities, companies must embrace data-driven strategies. These approaches enable companies to identify specific health disparities within their communities, understand the underlying factors contributing to these inequities, and develop targeted interventions. By leveraging data, companies can prioritize their efforts, allocate resources effectively, and more accurately measure the impact of their initiatives over time.

One key recommendation for companies is to assess where they can make a difference on reducing disparity in social indicators of health by incorporating an assessment of the commercial determinants of health framework into their environmental, social, and governance (ESG) strategies. This involves assess90eTJO x1.5-5.1316.7 (e)4..6 (s)1, (ev)14 (, 2.9 (a)20.s)

Collaboration among various stakeholders is crucial in addressing health inequities. The Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship emphasizes the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in developing comprehensive and coordinat-

# How ESG Investment Can Bridge the Gap

Health inequality is a global, multidimensional problem facing disproportionately in accessing essential medicine and health care. Bridging health inequality in our ESG era, pharmaceutical companies can have a meaningful impact on the global role in bridging the gap.

A key takeaway is the importance of aligning

Companies are increasingly recognizing the untapped potential of their employees in amplifying health equity efforts. Many are moving beyond traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs to offer more immersive and skill-based volunteering opportunities (e.g., by enabling employees to work directly in underserved communities, applying their scientific, technical, and business expertise to address local health challenges). Partnering with community organizations and social enterprises creates opportunities for employees to learn firsthand about the realities of health inequity and co-develop solutions grounded in local needs.

Integrating health equity into employee engagement strategies not only boosts the impact of ESG initiatives but also enhances employee satisfaction, retention, and

productivity. Offering incentives and recognition for volunteering—such as paid time off, matching donations, or leadership opportunities—can further drive participation and impact. Moreover, employee resource groups (ERGs) focused on health equity and diversity can play a valuable role in fostering a culture of inclusion and social responsibility. These grassroots, employee-led groups provide a platform for raising awareness about health disparities, advocating for change within the organization, and collaborating with external partners. ERGs can also serve as a sounding board for ESG strategies, ensuring that initia-

tives are informed by diverse perspectives and lived experiences.

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legitimacy to global health efforts, countering potential skepticism about the

## Mission of CHWs: How to

Community health workers (CHW) are a highly effective segment of the public health workforce, and are often underpaid. Most women of color, they dedicate their lives to improving the health of their neighbors, championing social justice, and strive to build healthier communities nationwide—one person at a time.

When multinational healthcare and pharma company Sanofi wanted to better understand and support the CHW workforce in the U.S., it forged a partnership with the National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW) to invest funds and talent into the creation of the CHWConnector—the first national digital platform for CHWs, which will launch in June 2024.

In collaboration with NACHW, nearly 2,000 Sanofi employees embarked on a listening journey that fostered much-needed trust and put the voices of CHWs at the center of the CHWConnector design process. This involved uniting CHWs from different states, many of whom were distrustful of participating in a national registry. As part of this initiative:

- 200 Sanofi employees supported the design of the CHWConnector digital platform.
- 75 CHWs were awarded Sanofi-supported scholarships to attend policy training in Washington, D.C., and subsequently held 117 legislative meetings on “Hill Day” in March 2024 to gain support for the newly introduced CHW Access Act that supports CHW reimbursement.

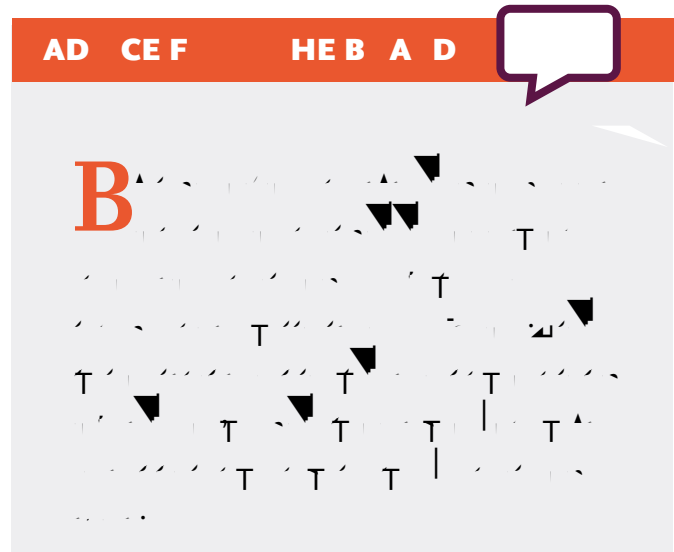
Sanofi’s All In for Community Health Workers initiative has brought long-term funding and accelerated capacity-building to NACHW’s mission to unify and support the CHW workforce and its policy platform across all 50 states, supporting powerful strategic engagement of NACHW stakeholders across sectors. Importantly, the initiative is an ongoing exercise in humility and listening for Sanofi that respects and supports CHWs’ self-determination and places CHWs at the center of designing the CHWConnector platform.

# It's Not Just About Money It's About How We Use It

Health insurance companies are increasingly positioned to understand the economic nature of health outcomes, and the line between healthcare and beyond medical care increasingly affects the well-being of their members. Recognizing that addressing health inequities requires a collaborative approach, these companies are increasingly focusing on building community-based partnerships to drive change. By forging relationships with local organizations, healthcare providers, government agencies, and academic institutions, health insurance providers can work on and create a more equitable healthcare landscape.

One key area where partnerships are essential is addressing the social determinants of health. Partnerships between health insurance companies and community-based organizations that have deep roots in the communities they serve allow for a tailored approach to tackling health disparities, as local organizations have a keen understanding of the unique challenges faced by their constituents. For example, one insurance company partnered with a local nonprofit to develop a program that connects individuals with community resources, such as housing assistance and food banks, in recognition of the fact that these factors play a significant role in health outcomes.

In addition to partnerships with community organizations, health insurance companies work closely with providers to identify and address disparities in care, recognizing that achieving health equity requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders within the health care system. These partnerships involve providing financial incentives for reducing



health disparities and offering technical assistance to help providers improve their practices. For example, one insurance company established a program that offers enhanced reimbursement rates to providers who demonstrate a commitment to reducing racial and ethnic disparities in care. Another initiative involves working with primary care practices to implement culturally competent care models and improve access to preventive services for underserved populations. By aligning incentives and providing support to health care providers, insurance companies can drive systemic change toward more equitable care delivery.

Collaboration with government agencies is another crucial aspect of addressing systemic health inequities. Companies have actively engaged with public health departments and other government entities to address the broader social and economic factors that influence health. These partnerships have led to initiatives focusing on issues such as housing stability, food security, and transportation access. By working hand in hand with government agencies, health insurance companies can contribute to the development of policies and programs that promote health equity on a larger scale.

Academic institutions also play a vital role in the fight against health inequity. Partnerships with universities and research organizations allow health insurance companies to stay informed about the latest findings in health equity research and best practices. These collaborations can help evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at reducing disparities and identify areas for improvement. Moreover, working with academic institutions can foster the development of innovative solutions to complex health equity challenges.

The experiences of health care insurance companies underscore the importance of community partnerships in addressing systemic health inequities. Through various partnerships, these companies can tackle the complex factors that influence health outcomes and work toward creating a more equitable future. Building trust and making long-term commitments to the communities they serve are essential components of successful collaboration. As the health care industry continues to evolve, fostering strong community relationships will be a critical strategy for reducing health disparities.



# While the health care industry is on the front line of promoting health and reducing disease, many other sectors also have an immense impact on the social, economic, and environmental factors that influence population health and health equity.

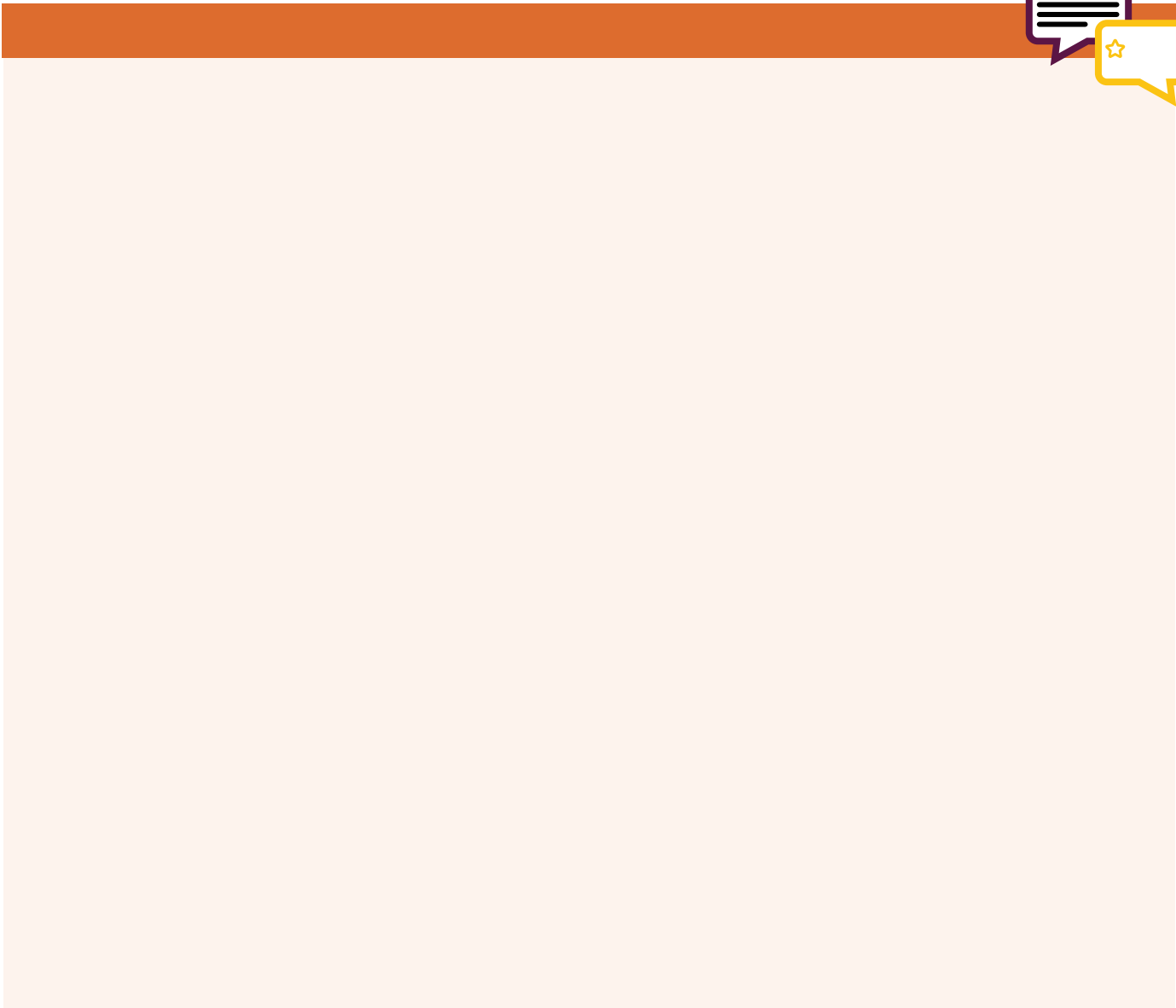
The recent 2024 BCCCC State of Corporate Citizenship Report shows that companies across industries are increasingly prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, along with employee health and wellness and sustainability efforts like greenhouse gas reduction. The opportunities created offer a chance for cross-sector collaboration to address root causes of health disparities.

For example, the finance industry identified DEI, employee health and wellness, and sustainability among its top social issues. Financial companies can promote health equity by increasing access to affordable financial services and homeownership in underserved communities, and by financing community development projects that create healthier living environments. The 2024 State of Corporate Citizenship Report also found that 61% of financial companies participate in organizations to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as Zero Hunger, Good Health and Wellbeing, Clean Water and Sanitation, and Reduced Inequalities. Seeing as the SDGs are significantly interconnected with health equity, corporate

reliable utilities.

In the technology industry, bridging the digital divide emerged as an area of focus.





## ANOREXIA NERVOSA:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Eating disorders affect nearly 30 million Americans, or 9% of the population, at some point in their lives.<sup>7</sup> The accompanying mental health conditions have far-reaching consequences that extend beyond the individual, impacting society.

Research reveals that people with eating disorders have one of the highest mortality rates among individuals with mental health conditions, at an estimate of more than 10,000 deaths annually in the U.S. Death by suicide is a significant contributor, with those experiencing eating disorder symptoms being 11 times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers.

# PLANS

## A MOVE FROM HEALTH EQUITY TO HEALTH JUSTICE

**A** the work for equitable health care access continues, a shift in terminology from health equity to health justice has been discussed. This change reflects a broader understanding of the social and commercial determinants of health and the systemic barriers that perpetuate inequities. Health justice fully encompasses the interconnected nature of health, climate and social justice, addressing the root cause of inequities. By focusing on health justice, we acknowledge the role of racism and other forms of discrimination in shaping health outcomes. Embracing health justice is not just a change in language; it is a commitment to dismantling the structures that have long perpetuated health disparities and creating a more equitable and just society.





1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, March 25). Risk for COVID-19 Infection, Hospitalization, and Death by Race/Ethnicity.





# Build your network Advance your ideas

Are you a CSR professional looking to share your experience and advice with others while staying current on emerging issues and leading-edge practice related to your work? Explore the benefits of joining on a BCCCC Advisory Board! The board are available only to General members and give you an invaluable opportunity to network with your peers. It's also a great way to keep you energized and in the know; the experience network will help advance your ideas and keep you motivated.

## B

### COLLABORATION

Looking for new strategies? Want to hear about the experience of other companies? Participate

# KNOW MORE. DO MORE. ACHIEVE MORE.

Based in the **Carroll School of Management**, the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship combines the moral capabilities of a professional community and the expertise of a leading academic institution for our members. We integrate the perspectives and experience of some of the leading corporate citizenship professionals in the field today with management best practices, helping to align our corporate citizenship objectives and business goals. Center expertise covers policies to come for our functional areas, our organization as a whole, and our individual leaders.

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