

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ASHTABULA AREA CITY SCHOOLS HONORED WITH NATIONAL AWARD FOR  
EXCEPTIONAL EMPLOYEE HEALTH PROGRAM**

*The 2023 Health Plan Hero award recognizes employers with exceptional high-value, low-cost health plans.*

ASHTABULA, Ohio — Ashtabula Area City Schools today received the 2023 [Health Plan Hero](#) award in a ceremony held in Washington, D.C. Ashtabula Area City Schools leadership was recognized for its outstanding employer-sponsored health program by national healthcare industry professionals.

Ashtabula Area City Schools was honored alongside ten other winning businesses, and participated in expert round table discussions with employees, human resource representatives, patient advocates, CEOs, and healthcare benefit design experts in Washington.

The program, developed by the national non-profit organization Patients Rising, recognizes companies with innovative health plans that expand patient access to care, lower out-of-pocket costs, lower employer spending, and are competitive due to increased workforce health, productivity, and savings. Ashtabula Area City Schools was recognized for its health plan that utilizes independent providers and a nurse navigator program to give employees access to reduced or zero cost-sharing healthcare services. Within three policy years, AACCS expects to realize a full \$10 million in savings.

"We at Ashtabula Area City Schools feel privileged to receive the Health Plan Hero Award, which acknowledges the dedication and effort we have invested in providing our employees with exceptional healthcare services," said Mark Astorino, Chief Financial Officer at Ashtabula Area City Schools. "The school district decided to break free from the conventional playbook, recognizing that the key to cost savings lies in offering superior healthcare at a more affordable rate to our valued employees. Receiving the Health Plan Hero award serves as a beacon, inspiring other employers in our community to witness the transformative impact that positive change can bring."

The award program was launched last year in response to nationwide increases in health coverage premiums and deductibles. Family premiums have increased by an average of 22% from 2015 to 2020, and deductibles for single-covered workers rose by 25% during that same time period.

“Ashtabula Area City Schools and those honored today prove that it is possible to provide insurance that expands patient access to care while saving money for both employee and employer,” said Terry Wilcox, CEO of Patients Rising. “Employers are the biggest providers of health insurance in this country, and these companies show that by taking a hands-on approach to their health plans, they can not only save money, but also provide more affordable, accessible care to their employees. This is truly disrupting the way healthcare is delivered and paid for in this country.”

More details on Ashtabula Area City Schools’ Health Plan Hero award are available [here](#).

### **Patients Rising**

Patients Rising is a non-profit organization serving patients and caregivers living with chronic or rare illnesses and disabilities. We work directly with these healthcare users in learning, seeking and advocating for access to the care they need.