

**STATEMENT OF DIANE C. LEWIS  
CHAIRPERSON  
D.C. HEALTH BENEFIT EXCHANGE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
COUNCILMEMBER YVETTE ALEXANDER, CHAIRPERSON**

**PUBLIC HEARING ON Bill 20-240  
“THE BETTER PRICES, BETTER QUALITY, BETTER CHOICES FOR HEALTH  
COVERAGGE AMENDMENT ACT OF 2013”**

**Wednesday, January 29, 2014, 11:00 am  
Room 412, John A. Wilson Building**

Chairperson Alexander, Members of the Committee, my name is Diane Lewis and I am the Chair of the Executive Board of the DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I’m here to urge the Council to pass and make permanent *the Better Prices, Better Quality, Better Choices for Health Coverage Amendment Act of 2013*, which, as you know, was unanimously approved by the Council on a temporary basis last June.

There is no doubt from any of us on the Executive Board of the DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority that this legislation has been essential to the successful launch of DC Health Link and that it will be even more important for its future.

The key provision in this legislation is the creation of “one big marketplace” for individual and small group health insurance in the District. That means that all individual health insurance sold in the District is now sold through DC Health Link. After a transition period in 2015, all small group policies will also be sold through DC Health Link.

One big marketplace is vitally important because it establishes one, consistent set of rules for the sale of health insurance to individuals, families and small businesses in the District. On top of that, DC Health Link provides the only way for consumers and small business owners to see each of the plan offerings on-line and truly compare apples-to-apples among their choices. By requiring all products to come through DC Health Link, we’re also able to ensure strong participation by insurance companies in this new marketplace so that consumers have access to the types of products at prices that they can afford. That participation is vitally important because financial help in the form of federal tax credits is only available for products sold

through state exchange marketplaces. We certainly don't want to create a two-tiered system in the District that limits those who need financial help to fewer choices.

Having a health insurance exchange with the participation of major insurers, numerous options for consumers, strong provider networks, and a competitive environment that drives down prices is the goal for each and every state exchange nationwide. I am pleased to report that DC Health Link has achieved that goal – and that is in large part due to this legislation's creation of one big marketplace.

With the strong support and collaboration of the Council, the Mayor, our sister agencies in District government, our dedicated staff at the Authority, and our DC Health Link Assistants who are our "boots on the ground" across the District, we had a successful launch of DC Health Link on October 1.

That success has been carried forward into quality, affordable health insurance that is now in effect for thousands of DC residents, owners and employees of our small businesses. Here in the District thousands of people have signed up for affordable quality coverage through DC Health Link.

Both as Chair of the Authority and as a DC resident, I am proud of our efforts to-date. As of Friday, January 10, 2014, 20,290 people have enrolled through DC Health Link in private health plans and Medicaid. We will release updated data on a monthly basis so our next release will be in early February.

While we are pleased with our enrollment success, we also acknowledge that there is much work to be done. Enrolling people who need coverage is our top priority.

I am truly honored to be part of the historic effort of implementing the ACA and making affordable, quality health insurance a reality for thousands of people in the District of Columbia. Swiftly enacting permanent legislation to maintain one big marketplace in the District's individual and small group health insurance market will be key to our ongoing success. I thank you and the other members of this committee for your ongoing support. It is my pleasure to turn things over to Mila Kofman, Executive Director of the DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority.

Again, thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to testify today.