



**Statement of Diane C. Lewis
Chair
D.C. Health Benefit Exchange Authority Executive Board**

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
COUNCILMEMBER VINCENT GRAY, CHAIRMAN**

**Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Oversight Hearing
Thursday, April 19, 10:00 am
Room 412, John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004**

Chairman Gray, 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 (HBX). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

As you know Mr. Chairman, when Congress passed the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in March of 2010, the District of Columbia seized the opportunity put forth by that law to ensure affordable, quality health care to those in the District who were uninsured and to improve coverage options for everyone in the individual and small business marketplaces.

Eight years later, the District has a proud record of success with the implementation of DC Health Link, the District's online health insurance marketplace. As you will hear from me and our Executive Director Mila Kofman, our plan is to continue building on that record.

To briefly review, according to press reports when the new marketplaces opened nationwide on October 1, 2013, DC Health Link was one of only four state-based marketplaces to be up and running, without any incidents, on day one. We also started with both an individual and small group (SHOP) marketplace – while the Federal Marketplace and many state-based marketplaces deferred their small group marketplaces to later dates.

Today, our individual marketplace is providing coverage to approximately 17,750 District residents and our SHOP Marketplace is covering nearly 77,000 employees of District small businesses and Members of Congress and their designated staff.

The Board and staff of HBX take our mission to cover the uninsured very seriously. That's why we are so proud to note that the District's uninsured population has been cut in half since the enactment of the ACA. In fact, more than 96% of District residents have health coverage today – and accomplishment that ranks the District between first and third in the nation depending on the study referenced.

In addition to covering the uninsured, we are committed to consistently improving our website – in particular the shopping tools available for our customers to make informed choices among their health coverage options. That work has not gone unnoticed. In January 2017, DC Health Link was ranked first among all state-based marketplaces and the federal marketplace by the Clear Choices Campaign for our consumer decision support tools and website. The Clear Choices Campaign is a coalition of consumer organizations, health insurers, and other health organizations dedicated to improving consumer choices.

Another way that HBX is continuing to innovate is through website development. We've moved the HBX website from a commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) product to open source code and an Agile approach. These changes mean we no longer have massive licensing fees and we can make changes to our website easily and without causing the website to shut down. Changes are also cost-effective because software is no-longer hard-coded and does not require months of development and testing.

We are excited that our IT development work is being recognized. In 2016, HBX was awarded the Best Practices for Innovation Award by Amazon Web Services – the only state-based marketplace in the nation to win an award in the IT space. In addition, the Massachusetts Health Connector selected HBX to replace their IT for SHOP and operate and manage their SHOP IT and operations. This is the first such state-based marketplace partnership in the country. We continue to conduct demonstrations for additional states and entities as well. And, Amazon Web Services has published a case study of our use of cloud technology.

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. As I hope you agree, we've made great strides already. But, equally important, we have much more work to do. Council passage of our FY 19 budget is a vital component of our ongoing success.

Building DC Health Link and continuing its improvement is not something HBX can accomplish alone. Since day one, we've relied on your strong support Chairman Gray, and that of your Council colleagues, the Mayor, our sister agencies, stakeholders, and consumer advocates. I thank you and the other members of this committee for your ongoing support.

Finally, with the Trump Administration and a Republican-controlled Congress, it is no secret that we are at a difficult point in time for health reform in our country. We've successfully battled efforts over the past year to repeal the ACA. We've also been able to withstand internal efforts in the Trump Administration to undermine the ACA – through shortening the open enrollment period, slashing marketing funding, cutting off funds for navigators who help get consumers enrolled in federal marketplace states, and more. We've been able to continue to succeed despite those federal efforts because of the foresight shown by you and other District Leaders in seizing the passage of the ACA and pursuing a state-based marketplace. As a state-based marketplace, many of these efforts don't impact us directly. That said, all of these attacks do make our job that much harder. But, with the strong consensus in the District to provide affordable, quality health coverage to all, I remain confident in our ability to continue to succeed.

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify today.