



**Testimony  
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Executive Director of the Health Benefit Exchange Authority  
Before the  
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**Agency Performance Oversight Hearing  
On the District of Columbia Health Benefit Exchange Authority**

**Wednesday, February 17, 2016 – 10:00 AM  
John A. Wilson Building, Room 123  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20004**

Chairperson Alexander and members of the Committee, my name is Mila Kofman. I am the Executive Director of the DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority (HBX) and it is an honor to be here today.

Last year when I testified, I reported on the success of our first year of operations; outlined how we achieved those results; and updated you on the ongoing work necessary to ensure DC Health Link's continued success.

This year, I am pleased to report on significant IT improvements and the conclusion of our third open enrollment period.

As a way of background, before HBX existed, four District agencies -- the Department of Health Care Finance; the Department of Human Services; the Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking; and the Department of Health -- began the important work to implement the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in the District. Through their efforts the District obtained its first federal grant in September 2010 to begin planning for a state-based exchange. In January 2012, the "Health Benefit Exchange Authority Establishment Act of 2011" was enacted. In July 2012, the HBX Executive Board was appointed by the Mayor. In January 2013, the Office of Contracts and Procurement entered into an IT services contract to build the online marketplace. In January 2013, I was hired as Executive Director for HBX. With significant help from diverse stakeholders including patient and consumer advocates, physicians and other providers, brokers, health plans, small businesses and

many others, DC Health Link was built quickly from the ground up reflecting what a “village can do.”

Although the District was the last state to start its IT build, DC Health Link opened for business on time on October 1, 2013 for individual and small business customers. Bloomberg News reported that the District was one of only four states that opened on time and stayed open.

Also in October 2013, the federal government designated the District’s small business marketplace as the source of coverage for Members of Congress and their designated staff. In December 2013, President Obama enrolled in coverage through DC Health Link (and renewed that coverage in December 2014 and December 2015).

In 2016, DC Health Link offers a choice of four health insurers (Aetna, CareFirst, Kaiser and United) and 136 different coverage options for small businesses. There are 26 coverage options (including 2 catastrophic) for individuals and their families offered by CareFirst and Kaiser Permanente in the individual marketplace. Individual and small business plans vary from high deductible health plans to zero deductible options, and include HMO, PPO, and Point of Service plans.

From October 1, 2013 to February 2, 2016, DC Health Link has served 207,195 people: 33,379 people enrolled in a private qualified health plan, 147,567 people have been determined eligible for Medicaid, and 26,249 people enrolled through the DC Health Link small business marketplace (includes Congressional enrollment).

There are 22,912 customers with 2016 coverage through DC Health Link’s individual marketplace:

- 6,012 new customers;
- 3,085 existing customers shopped and changed their coverage;
- 13,815 existing customers were renewed automatically.

DC Health Link had 6,012 new customers for the 2016 plan year compared to 4,879 new customers for the 2015 plan year – a 23% increase in new customers. In addition, analysis shows that existing customers who shopped online for their 2016 coverage saved on average 5% in premiums for 2016. Finally, the age mix of the DC Health Link Individual Marketplace customers has become younger. Sixty-one percent of new customers are 34 years old or younger compared to 49% of renewing customers.

Since day one, we have offered employers and employees broad choices. This choice opportunity means that, for the first time, small businesses can, as large ones do, offer a choice of insurance companies and coverage levels to their employees. The employer receives one bill even when employees choose coverage from different insurance companies.

We are proud of the choices and competitively priced products DC Health Link offers the business community. The transparency established through DC Health Link means that for the first time insurers are competing for customers through price and quality. In fact, the DC Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington became DC Health Link customers – each one realizing savings and offering their own employees better benefits. In addition to enrolling through DC Health Link, each has partnered with us to promote small business and individual enrollment through DC Health Link.

We are also proud of our record on making a significant dent in the number of uninsured residents in the city. In September 2015, the U.S. Census Bureau released its annual report on health insurance coverage in the United States. It found that the rate of uninsured in the District of Columbia had fallen from 6.7% (42,000 people) in 2013 to 5.3% (34,000 people) in 2014. That's a drop of approximately 20%. The District is tied for third place (with Hawaii) for the lowest number of uninsured residents in the nation.

We are successful for many reasons including: consistent, strong support from our Mayors and the Council and particularly the leadership of Chairwoman Alexander; strong collaboration with the federal government; active participation and guidance from community members, stakeholders, and advocates; strong partnerships with the health insurers offering coverage through DC Health Link; ongoing cooperation among sister agencies in the District; and a dedicated Executive Board that at times works full time – on top of their day jobs and for no compensation – to help us succeed.

## **DC HEALTH LINK SITE IMPROVEMENTS**

Based on feedback from customers, brokers, and our own experience we have made significant improvements to both DC Health Link Individual Marketplace and Small Business Marketplace (SHOP). A few examples include:

- **New Decision Support Tools:** HBX added consumer decision support tools in the individual marketplace, including an all plan doctor directory in English and Spanish; and DC Health Link Plan Match powered by Consumers' CHECKBOOK. Plan Match is an anonymous shopping tool, which allows customers to shop and compare plans showing out of pocket costs including premiums, coinsurance, copays, and deductible based on a customer's medical needs and health as well as a customer's choice of doctors. Small business customers also now have an all plan doctor directory. HBX added a new budget estimator to help employers determine, based on their budget, which options to offer. This tool was designed by a small business customer. In 2016, HBX will add DC Health Link Plan Match for small business customers.
- **Enhanced Plan Information:** For both the individual marketplace and SHOP, HBX enhanced information displayed to make shopping, searching, and comparing plans easier for customers. This enhanced display provides a detailed overview of plan

benefits and costs. In addition, a “compare” feature now allows customers to compare up to three plans on one screen.

- **New automated online self-service updates:** Customers in the individual marketplace are now able to update their enrollment information through their online accounts. These updates include changing their address, adding and removing family members, such as adding a new baby to the plan, and terminating coverage (for example, when a person has new job-based coverage and wants to cancel his or her individual coverage).
- **SHOP Employer Account Snapshot Page:** All plan offerings and contributions now occur on one page so employers can make modifications to options and see the impact automatically reflected in the cost estimate.
- **Easy Employee Roster Upload:** Added ability for employers to upload a roster of eligible employees, including new hires and terminations, through a simplified spreadsheet at any time (i.e. during the initial employer application process as well as at any time throughout the plan year).
- **On-Demand SHOP Premium Billing Report:** On-demand premium billing report available to employers (and brokers) at any time throughout the plan year showing all enrolled employees, their plan information, premiums, and contribution breakdown. Report is available as a downloadable spreadsheet for import into payroll systems.
- **Easy SHOP Renewal:** A renewal plan year application is automatically created as a copy of the current plan year with all of the current plan year options pre-selected. This feature enables employers keeping their same options for the next plan year to click just one button and then to complete the entire renewal employer and employee process. Employees have the option to shop for plans during the renewal open enrollment period, but are not required to take action - employees who take no action by the end of the renewal open enrollment period are automatically re-enrolled in the same or comparable plan for the next plan year.
- **New Payment Option SHOP:** Online bill pay via Wells Fargo.
- **New SHOP Broker Features:** New features allow brokers to do everything for employers and employees.
- **Improved online customer experience:** The webpage was redesigned to enhance performance, speed, and user experience. Both Individual Marketplace and SHOP have been improved. The number of screens to click has been reduced for quicker enrollment:

- Reduced from 28 screens to 11 screens on the individual application (full pay);
  - Reduced from 22 screens to 5 screens on the employer application; and
  - Reduced from 26 screens to 6 screens for employee shopping, account set up, and plan selection.
  - Added a progress bar (shows % complete similar to commercial websites) (Individual QHP and employee enrollment)
  - Performance data for 1/1/2016 to 2/2/2016: 6:33 minutes average time on site; 1.45 seconds average page load time; 42,852 sessions; 21,673 unique visitors
- **Improved Website Performance:** Quicker Account Set Up and Enrollment. Average in minutes:
    - 1:46 Create account
    - 2:42 Auto check for current customer status (pre-populates data for existing customers)
    - 2:39 Verify Identity (federal hub)
    - 1:50 Enter family demographics (federal hub, hourly re-pinging based on federal hub performance – no impact on customer)
    - 0:36 Select family members to be covered (default is all covered)
    - 3:27 Shop for a plan (on average 4 sessions – customer deliberative process)
    - 1:27 Thank you confirmation page
  - **Additional product offerings:** added standard plans in the individual marketplace. Standard plans have the same out-of-pocket liability and benefits. Customers can shop using apples to apples comparisons. Thirty-seven percent of DC Health Link customers enrolled in these new products. Also we now make vision coverage available through VSP. In 2016, dental insurance will be available in SHOP.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Since we opened for business, we have learned many lessons. We initially used a commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) product to build DC Health Link. After the initial build, we faced millions of dollars in annual licensing fees for COTS products. Change requests were hundreds of thousands and at times millions of dollars due to the complexity of changing hard-coded software. Similar to custom hard-coded traditional state eligibility and other state IT systems, product development cycles were 6 to 8 months. Deployments required the Marketplace to be off-line in maintenance, which meant customers could not use the Marketplace while the system was down.

We now use open source code and an Agile approach. Open source code means that we no longer have licensing fees. The Agile approach allows us to make fixes, corrections, changes, and enhancements quickly. We can change our code daily without down time in a cost-effective way. Code fixes/upgrades are done while the production environment is open. Customers do not experience system down time for software upgrades. Changes are cost-effective because software is no longer hard-coded and does not require months of

development and testing of the entire code. In 2016 using federal grants we are looking to convert some remaining COTS products to open source.

## **OUTREACH**

HBX engaged in a robust outreach and enrollment campaign for both the FY15 (open enrollment 2) and FY16 (open enrollment 3). Aimed at connecting with DC residents and small business owners and their employees “*where they live, work, shop, play and pray,*” HBX employed a successful hyper-local approach, which consisted of educational workshops, speaking engagements, and a speaker’s bureau, earned and paid media, social and digital platforms, advertisements, and partnerships with community and civic organizations, District government and federal agencies, faith-based institutions, business partners and retailers. This third open enrollment, DC Health Link launched an “Each One LINK One” campaign encouraging District residents to talk to their family, friends, neighbors, coworkers and to help link a resident to health coverage.

The following are a few highlights of events:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> City-wide Open Enrollment Information and Health Fair – This event opened the enrollment period, and also served as the national kickoff for enrollment featuring special guest, U.S. HHS Secretary Sylvia Burwell, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes-Norton, and Councilmember Todd.
- One Touch Enrollment Sites -- These include assisters, brokers, staff from ESA and HBX to complete enrollment in one visit.
- Nine (9) Enrollment sites known as “Storefronts.”
- Faith-In-Action Interfaith Campaign – Engaging the faith-based community as partners in outreach and education.
- National ACA Latino Enrollment Week of Action - designed to boost enrollment in the Latino community and featured a special guest, Jeanne Lambrew, Deputy Assistant to President Obama for Health Policy and Director of the Health Policy Office.
- National ACA African-American Enrollment Week -- Designed to boost enrollment in the African-American community especially among African American men.
- National ACA Young Invincible Week of Action -- Designed to boost enrollment and outreach to young adults; event included the Cafe Crawl, Shape Up, Sign Up and Game Night with the Wizards at the Verizon Center.
- Movie Theatre Nights at Hunger Games and Star Wars - DC Health Link advertisement and exhibition at the Regal Gallery Place Movie Theatre to reach theater goers as they entered and exited the theatre.
- Beauty and Barber Shop Day.
- NBC4 Health and Fitness Expo - Provided information about the District’s online marketplace for health insurance. An ongoing loop video presentation on how to shop, compare and enroll in health insurance through DC Health Link.
- CVS Pharmacy - DC Health Link informational kiosks were positioned in every local CVS store (62) in the city along with on-site representatives and table displays for direct customer engagement. DC Health Link also actively participated in numerous CVS health fairs. These events included enrollment, health information tables.

- DC Health Link “Fact Mobs” – Street teams of volunteers took to metro subway stops with a bull horn, foot ladder, plenty of energy and loud cheers to get commuters’ attention as they shouted out seven major facts about the ACA and DC Health Link. The volunteers also passed out literature, answered questions and directed commuters to visit nearby enrollment centers.
- MLK, Jr Day Holiday Peace Walk and Parade - DC Health Link representatives and its community partners marched in the spirit of Dr. King who said, *“Of all the forms of inequality, injustices in health care are the most shocking and inhumane.”* Participants held DC Health Link banners and marched in the annual event reminding people to enroll by the deadlines, handing out flyers and directing residents to enrollment events, including one-on-one enrollment support the same day at nearby UPO Petey Green Community Center. At the Petey Green Community Center, DC Health Link representatives were available onsite with information and enrollment assistance to honor Dr. King’s legacy and Day of Service. The event is designed to help DC residents enroll both before and after the parade on MLK Jr. Avenue, SE. Several planned activities took place at the Center including Street store fresh produce, workshops, cooking and healthy living demonstrations and more. DC Health Link certified Assistors provided in-person education and enrollment assistance to District residents as well as answered questions, and provided information about Medicaid options and premium reductions for private coverage.
- 24-Hour Plus Marathon Relay - Data from the first and second open enrollment periods showed that people are deadline-driven and wait until the last day to enroll. Last-minute enrollment can lead to longer wait times at the call center and longer lines for in-person help. One week before the enrollment deadline of the third open enrollment period (January 31, 2016), DC Health Link targeted last minute shoppers, urging them not to wait until the last minute and to avoid the IRS tax penalty. The 24-Hour Plus Enrollment Marathon Relay provided around-the-clock opportunities for District residents to enroll at locations throughout the city before the final rush. The success of the Marathon in FY15 resulted in a repeat in FY16. The FY2016 marathons began at Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School. A special guest, White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Implementation Kristie Canegallo helped launch the enrollment marathon. Enrollment then relayed to Cork Market, Lae Clinica Del Pueblo and Mary’s Center. For the evening, the marathon moved to Ben’s Chili Bowl and then to The Diner, early morning. On Sunday, the marathons concluded at more than a dozen places of worship. Other White House staff volunteered for these marathon events and for the “Knock, Knock” door-to-door canvassing. Councilmembers helped get the word out through newsletters and tweets, and other social media platforms. CM Todd also assisted with door to door canvassing.
- Latin American Embassies – In partnership with GWHCC and Hispanic brokers and Assistors, DC Health Link held weekly enrollment events at The Consulate of El Salvador. Other events were held at The Consulate of México, The Consulate of Honduras, and The Consulate of Colombia.
- Shape Up, Sign Up Campaign - DC Health Link partnered with LA Fitness to host a series of information and enrollment events during the month of January to promote health

and wellness – as well as enrollment through DC Health Link. Trained experts were onsite to provide enrollment assistance and information.

- Cafe Crawl -- DC Health Link assisters and certified navigators were at District cafés to enroll young people and other customers in coverage. The assisters and navigators were at cafés such as the Tryst Coffeehouse, The Diner, and the Potters House, and provided DC Health Link information and enrollment help.

HBX used a variety of multilingual bi-fold and tri-fold brochures, rack cards, palm cards, posters, window clings and banners to create awareness. HBX maintains an active and interactive presence on many social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, SnapChat and Instagram. Twitter response strategies were implemented on a regular basis. Digital communications included LED Displays at the Verizon Center.

### **RECOGNITION OF HBX OUTREACH EFFORTS**

In March 2015, DC Health Link was recognized for innovation and creativity as a finalist in the category of “Community Relations Campaign of the Year” at the 2015 PR Week’s Awards. PR Week is a leading international public relations trade magazine. HBX’s outreach efforts have been covered by national and local news, radio, and TV.

HBX staff have been invited to share in the White House Youth Digital Summit (October 2015) and served on national panels including at the 2015 Enroll America State of Enrollment Conference’s *State-Based Marketplaces: RoundTable Discussion with Key Leaders*; the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)’s *2015 Workshop for Building Toward SBM Financial Sustainability panel on Marketing Marketplaces*; and a webinar entitled “Best Practices in Affordable Care Act Outreach and Enrollment” hosted by the HHS Partnership Center and the CMS Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Additionally, in recognition of creative and effective outreach efforts, HBX’s Director of Outreach and Community Engagement was asked to author a chapter in a college text book on communication. The chapter focuses on reaching the uninsured and will be published in the next edition of *Health Industry Communication: New Media, New Methods, New Message*. The publisher is Jones & Barletta Learning.

### **ENROLLMENT, OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

To date, over 500 brokers, 188 assisters and navigators, and 80 certified application counselors have been authorized as DC Health Link trained experts. All are important to the outreach and enrollment success of DC Health Link. DC Health Link partnered with many groups to host events to achieve broader community outreach. The partnerships were with District government agencies, community organizations, local small business partners, CVS Pharmacies, faith-based entities and others. SEE ATTACHMENT A.

## **CONCLUSION**

We will continue to focus on the opportunities created by the Affordable Care Act to achieve universal coverage here in the District. With your ongoing support, we can become the first state where every resident has affordable quality health coverage.

## ATTACHMENT A

### ✓ **Business Partners**

- Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (GWHCC)
- DC Chamber of Commerce (DCCC)
- Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington (RAMW)
- National Association of Health Underwriters (NAHU)

### ✓ **Community Partners, Educational Institutions and Community Health Centers**

- DC Public Schools Office of Student Wellness
- DC Public Charter Schools Board
- Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School
- George Washington University School of Public Health
- University of the District of Columbia
- Howard University
- American University
- Georgetown University
- Leadership Council for Healthy Communities
- Latin American Youth Center
- Ward 7 Health Alliance
- Ward 8 Health Council
- Anacostia Coordinating Council
- THEARC: Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus
- Mary's Center
- Whitman Walker Health
- La Clinica Del Pueblo
- Unity Health Care (Anacostia and Minnesota Avenue Health Centers)
- Community of Hope (Marie Reed, Family Health & Birth and Conway Health and Resources Centers)
- Us Helping Us

### ✓ **Professional Organizations, Patient Advocates and Consumer Advocates**

- Cancer Consortium
- National Association of Minority Contractors
- National Hispanic Medical Association
- Families USA
- DC Fiscal Policy Institute
- AARP DC Chapter
- Families USA
- Enroll America
- Young Invincibles
- DC Appleseed
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
- National Women's Law Center

- Consumers Union
- DC Primary Care Association
- Medical Society of the District of Columbia
- Multiple Sclerosis Society
- American Heart Association
- Autism Speaks
- DC Behavioral Health Association
- National Council of La Raza
- Out2Enroll

✓ **Faith Based Partners (not a full list)**

- Wednesday Clergy Fellowship
- DC Baptist Ministers Conference
- Bishop William P. DeVeaux, African Methodist Episcopal Church 2<sup>nd</sup> District
- Union Temple Baptist Church – Rev. Willie Wilson, Senior Pastor
- First Baptist Church Randolph, Rev. Dr. Frank Tucker, Senior Pastor
- Covenant Baptist Church UCC, Reverends Christine and Dennis Wiley, Senior Pastors
- Campbell AME Church, Rev. Dr. Henry White, Senior Pastor
- Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, Rev. Derrick Harkins, Former Pastor
- African American Episcopal (AME) Church 2<sup>nd</sup> District RED
- Inner Light Ministries
- Metropolitan Community Church of Washington
- Masjid Muhammad, Inc. Mosque
- Our Lady Queen of The Americas -Parish of The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington
- Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Father Thomas Frank
- Kedus Gabriel Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church
- St. Mary's Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church
- Sikh Gurdwara, DC
- Chinese Community Church
- Islamic Center of Washington, DC
- Vietnamese Chua Giac Hoang Buddhist Temple
- Pilgrim A.M.E. Church, Rev. Dr. Wendell Christopher, Sr., Pastor
- Greater St. Paul, Rev. Floyd Patterson
- All Nations Baptist Church, Rev. Dr. James Coleman
- Faith United Church of Christ, Rev. Arlecia Simmons
- New Bethel Baptist Church, Rev. Dexter Nutall
- Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church, Rev. Dr. Michael E. Bell, Sr., Pastor
- Brown Memorial A.M.E. Church, Rev. Charles Smith, Pastor
- New Bethany Baptist Church, Floyd Patterson, Senior Pastor
- New Morning Star Baptist, Rev. Donald Sadler, Pastor
- Greater New St. Paul Baptist, Rev. Dr. Regretta Ruffin, Pastor
- Moorish Science Temple, Brother Phillip Chase El

- Dupont Park Seventh Day Adventist, Dr. Marcus Harris, Pastor
- Capitol Hill Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Dr. Gene Michael Donaldson
- First Church Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Pastors John Trusty and Lisa Smith-Reid
- Antioch Baptist Church of Deanwood, Rev. Dr. Eric Baldwin, Pastor
- Church of Christ, Min. Daniel Lester, Pastor
- Pilgrim A.M.E. Church, Rev. Dr. Wendell Christopher, Sr., Pastor
- Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, Rev. William H. Lamar, IV, Pastor
- Shiloh Baptist Church, Rev. Wallace Chares Smith, Senior Pastor
- Peoples Congregational UCC, Rev. Leslie Dowdell-Cannon, Acting Senior Minister
- Plymouth Congregational UCC, Rev. Graylan Hagler, Pastor
- Ward Memorial A.M.E. Church, Rev. Dr. Michael O. Thomas, Pastor
- New Morning Star Baptist, Rev. Donald Sadler
- Michigan Park Christian Church, Rev. Marvin Owens
- St. John United Baptist, Rev. Dr. John Alexander
- New Bethany Baptist Church, Rev. Dr. Carson Wise

✓ **Embassy Partners**

- Consulate of El Salvador
- Consulate of Mexico
- Consulate of Honduras
- Consulate of Columbia

✓ **Retail and Small Business**

CVS Stores, Ben's Chili Bowl, Cork Market and Tasting Room, Jin Lounge, Lee's Flower and Card Shop, Mary Woods Florist, Petals, Ribbons and Beyond (Florist), World Class Barbershop, Best Cuts Barbershop, Dazzles Salon, Christopher's Salon, Golden Scissors, Pizza 17, DC Brau, Bubbles Laundromat, Mama's Laundromat, LA Fitness, Jubilee Ice Cream, Huge & Cry Shirtmakers, Lunch Market, Curbside Cupcakes, Mess Hall, Union Market, Urbanstems, Compass Coffee, Denny's, Canal Park Ice Skating Rink, Potters House, Tryst Café, The Diner, Downtown Locker Room, Pleasant Pops (Popsicle Store), Board Room (Bar Lounge), Rhino Bar, Buffalo Billiards, Cove (Young Entrepreneurs Bar/Lounge), Iron Horse Tap Room (Bar)