



Mary's Center

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**Testimony of Christian Narro
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**Before the
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
AGENCY BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING**

*DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority Fiscal Year 2016-2017
Committee on Health & Human Services
Chairperson, Councilmember Yvette Alexander*

**Wednesday, April 13, 2016 – 10:00 am
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20004**

Good morning Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Christian Narro and I am the Health Access Program Manager at Mary's Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center located in Wards 1 and 4 in the District of Columbia, as well as in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland. I am here to present testimony in support of the DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority FY 2016-17 Budget submission.

Mary's Center's Social Change Model addresses the collective determinants of health by tackling the social, economic, and educational barriers that are at the root of many of the poor health outcomes in our communities. Many of our participants prior to the Affordable Care Act were unable to obtain coverage for reasons that included affordability, pre-existing medical conditions, and not being offered through their employer.

We believe strongly in the mission of the DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority (HBX). Since the first year of the options offered through the Affordable Care Act in 2013, we have worked with DC Health Link to ensure that all citizens of the District who are uninsured recognize what they are eligible for and get covered.

Through the leadership of DC Health Link, Mary's Center's In Person Assisters (IPAs) are provided with the necessary support to ensure the city is covered with their services at events that sustain all in recognition of what they are eligible for and how to apply. This initiative assists DC Health Link to achieve its mission of decreasing the number of uninsured residents in the District of Columbia. In fact, a new analysis from the Kaiser Foundation shows that DC leads the nation in enrolling eligible residents through its health insurance marketplace. The analysis states that at 74 percent, the District has enrolled the highest percentage of people nationwide. Since the inception of the ACA and HBX, Mary's Center has serviced over 2,182 participants. We currently have two IPAs, who in this enrollment season alone facilitated the enrollment and reenrollment of over 350 consumers for both private insurance and Medicaid. Additionally, Mary's Center's partnership with DC Health Link yielded two successful individual events: the LGBTQ Outreach Event in December 2015 and the Latino Leadership Symposium in January 2016. In the former, Assisters from Mary's Center and other organizations helped participants with insurance enrollments. In the latter, several leaders of the Latino Community gathered together to discuss and promote DC Health Link's mission to reach out to the remaining uninsured population in the District of Columbia.

There have been several and continued improvements to the services provided by HBX. For instance, their website is faster and more user-friendly and their Call Center's wait time is now minimal.

Mary's Center also counted on HBX's support to participate in outreach events geared towards the Ethiopian community in the District. Their guidance and partnership yielded the creation of promotional materials in the Amharic language, for which we received great feedback from consumers. My colleague Tamrat Workineh will expand more on this achievement.

While the statistics speak to the Assisters' remarkable work, the most important piece is that District residents now have the ability to obtain affordable and comprehensive coverage to seek services for their medical needs – which had previously been impossible for so many residents. Moreover, DC Health Link's funding is necessary for case management and health literacy education that newly insured individuals need. It is through this case management that residents understand how to identify a medical home, how to ensure that their insurance does not lapse, what the premiums are, etc. Case Management activities are integral to the funding support provided by DC Health Link and continue throughout the year. Year-round funding is vital to the success of the program.

The DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority has done tremendous work throughout the community and works tirelessly to support the goal of ensuring that all District residents know that there is an affordable coverage option for them. District residents have benefited greatly from DC Health Link and the excellent service it provides. District residents deserve to have that excellent service continue by making sure DC Health Link is a fully funded health insurance marketplace.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.