



**Mary's
Center**

TESTIMONY

TO THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

COUNCILMEMBER YVETTE ALEXANDER, CHAIR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE FINANCE OVERSIGHT HEARING

Wednesday, April 27 2016

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20004

BY

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PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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My Good Morning, Councilwoman Alexander and members of the Committee.

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in front of your committee today. My name is Maria Gomez, President and CEO of Mary's Center.

Mary's Center is a \$43M community health center attending to over 40,000 participants every year. Our experience in working with patients in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia allows us to compare the impressive work that our city has accomplished in insuring coverage for the majority of our residents. With our nation's emphasis on prevention and cost-containment within the healthcare delivery, there is even a greater demand that the DC Healthcare Alliance is streamlined and accessible to patients who qualify.

Current State

Presently, having participants of the Alliance program recertify in person twice a year is extremely onerous but more important it is a disincentive to continue with the application process, causing individuals to neglect getting coverage until they are incapacitated from their pain.

Or like Lidia whose cancer was so advanced at the time she was diagnosed that she had her mastectomy done one month later. She then received six sessions of chemotherapy and began radiation. At this time, she was already extremely depressed and devastated. She was disheartened both by the pain and the expensive medical bills when she finally arrived at Mary's Center to assist her in navigating the DC Healthcare Alliance process. If she had been enrolled in primary care, we could have probably diagnosed her early at less cost to the system.

We know that over 50% of healthy individuals terminate the application process because the lines are too long and they cannot afford to continue to come in person or they risk losing their meager jobs that put food on the table.

Request

Director Turnage and his staff have been very receptive and engaged in continuing to support and improve the DC Healthcare Alliance.

Today I want to acknowledge that the Director has agreed to put together a taskforce to address the Alliance issues in order to get eligible individuals enrolled timely and into a primary care setting early, such as Mary's Center. We are asking that by this June the team is convened to address the recertification process: Either eliminating the twice a year in person recertification or allow the health centers to recertify individuals where they are getting their

care. This will address any language barriers and timeliness of getting certified and more important comprehensive services. Saving the city money and keeping our DC residents healthy.

Thank you for the opportunity and look forward to the Chair's and committee support.