



Testimony before the DC Committee on Health and Human Services in support of the Health Benefit Exchange Authority

Tania Hindert, Senior Director of Program Services, Mary's Center

This testimony is being provided to Madam Chair Yvette Alexander, and members of the Council Committee on Health and Human Services in support of the Health Benefit Exchange Authority. My name is Tania Hindert and I am the Senior Director of Program Services 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.

Mary's Center builds better futures through the delivery of health care, education, and social services in a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner for each individual. Our social change model integrates these three major services with the purpose of saving lives, stabilizing families, and strengthening communities. Mary's Center's Social Change Model addresses the social 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, and since the first year of the options offered through the Affordable Care Act, 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.

With the passage of the Affordable Care Act and the implementation of the District's marketplace DC Health Link, District residents have the opportunity to apply for affordable coverage and no longer have to delay care due to insurance issues. Through the leadership of DC Health Link, Mary's Center's IPAs are provided with the support necessary to ensure the city is covered with IPAs and events that support all in recognizing what they are eligible for and how to apply. This leadership and initiative supports DC Health Link to achieve its mission of decreasing the number of uninsured residents in the District of Columbia. Currently, there are 22,912 participants with 2016 health insurance coverage through DC Health Link's individual marketplace. At Mary's Center we currently have two IPAs, who in this enrollment season alone, facilitated the enrollment and reenrollment of over 340 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 of last year, and the Latino Leadership Symposium this past January. In the former, Assistants 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.



Mary's Center also arranged to participate in outreach events geared towards the Ethiopian community in DC, and helped DC Health Link in the creation of promotional materials in the Amharic language. Assisters will continue supporting participants who qualify for special enrollment throughout the remainder of the year.

Of note, 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 not only supports enrollment but also the necessary 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 are the premiums, etc. Case Management activities are integral to the funding support provided by DC Health Link and go on year round, even though funding supports nine months of program activities.

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.