



**On April 13, 2016, two Mary's Center representatives testified at the Agency Budget Oversight Hearing on the importance of getting covered with Health Insurance. Tamrat Workineh and Christian Narro both spoke of the importance of the DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority and the DC Health Link and how these resources need to be permanently available to community members to allow them better access to health coverage.**

**Tamrat Workineh, DC Health Link In-Person Assister, Mary's Center**

Good Morning, Madam Chairperson and members of the committee,

I am here to present my testimony about the role played by DC Health Link (DCHL) and Sister Organizations. My name is Tamrat Workineh. I am an In-Person Assister (IPA) at Mary's Center.

As a certified and bilingual IPA, I am the front line of consumer-engaging experience. I provide face-to-face consumer counseling, translate educational materials into Amharic - the third most widely spoken language in the District, and work jointly with DCHL, the Economic Service Administration Centers (ESA), and other stakeholders.

Madam Chairperson and members of the committee;

Providing awareness and conducting enrollment is not an easy task, mainly for Assisters. It requires perseverance, responsibility, great customer handling, and trust. Embraced with all these qualities and team work, it was possible to meet the intended objectives. We have created access to quality, affordable health coverage for District residents and become the best in the nation in signing up the highest percentage of people eligible for private health insurance coverage.

During the Third Open Enrollment Period season (OEP3), DCHL and I worked tirelessly to create materials in the Amharic language. These materials led to the participation and engagement of the Ethiopian community in several enrollment events, particularly at faith-based gatherings, in which hundreds of attendees were provided with health insurance and enrollment information.

Our success was not achieved overnight, however. Efforts exerted by supervisors and Assisters of DCHL, Mary's Center, Whitman-Walker, and other stakeholders made it all possible. In spite of cold and blustery weather, in the evening or on weekends, unchallenged by family ties and social affairs, we reached the unreached through One-Touch enrollments, Knock-Knock campaign, and faith-based events. These are just a few examples.



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Before closing my testimony, allow me to share some words of consumers who benefited from the enrollment:

“Enrollment through DC Health Link saved me unaffordable medical expense. Thank you DC Health Link for making my life easy.”

“A week after getting insured through One Touch enrollment, I was admitted to Howard Hospital on emergency. How could I pay my bill, if I had no Medicaid?”

“DC Health Link Website simplified my enrollment from in-line to online!”

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

**Christian Narro, Bilingual Health Access & DC Health Link Program Manager, Mary's Center**

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, Assistors 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.