



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

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DC Health Link's Success Results from Strong Partnerships with the Community

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DC's online health insurance exchange, www.dchealthlink.com, has helped over 80,000 residents get access to affordable private health insurance and Medicaid. The District's success in enrollment is due to the efforts of the exchange's leadership and staff to form meaningful partnerships with community organizations, small businesses, and the health industry.

Community feedback has informed a lot of DC Health Link's decision making over the last year – building broad support for the exchange's consumer-friendly rules and regulations, for the way its operations are funded, and for its efforts to educate and assist consumers. The DC Fiscal Policy Institute testified to some of these successes today before the Committee on Health and Human Services. Here's what we said:

DC Health Link has involved consumers, doctors, and health insurance companies in making policy decisions. The exchange has used working groups to get recommendations from stakeholders regarding key policy issues. This year, DC Health Link sought input to develop the set of requirements that a health plan must meet in order to be certified and sold on the exchange. As a result, health plans will be required to provide standardized data on the number and type of doctors in their network. They also will have to submit information and justification for changes in plan prices. We hope DC Health Link continues to involve the community in policy decisions – especially when developing rules for what it means for a health plan to have an adequate set providers in its network.

DC Health Link has involved stakeholders in their budgeting and financing discussions. This year, DC Health Link held two public forums on its fiscal year 2016 budget request and took community suggestions on funding for its different operations. The exchange also implemented a consumer-friendly way to pay for its operations, on a one-year-basis, using a strategy recommended by one of its stakeholder working groups. While this community engagement was helpful, other agencies that fund activities interconnected with DC Health Link, such as consumer assistance for Medicaid applicants supported by the Department of Health Care Finance, should also be included in budget discussions for the exchange. A report on the funding and activities of all agencies connected to the exchange would help advocates and policy makers understand and assess how well the city is implementing health reform.

DC Health Link relies on partner organizations that help with consumer assistance and outreach. DC Health Link staff have used community feedback to improve the consumer experience. DC has had some technology issues, as the federal government and all state exchanges

have, but quick responses by staff and a strong network of people hired to assist consumers have mitigated many enrollment issues. DC Health Link is also using the experiences of brokers, small businesses, and trade associations to inform quality improvement.

To read a copy of the full testimony, click [here](#).