



February 12, 2014

## DC Health Link Report Shows Continued Growth in Health Coverage

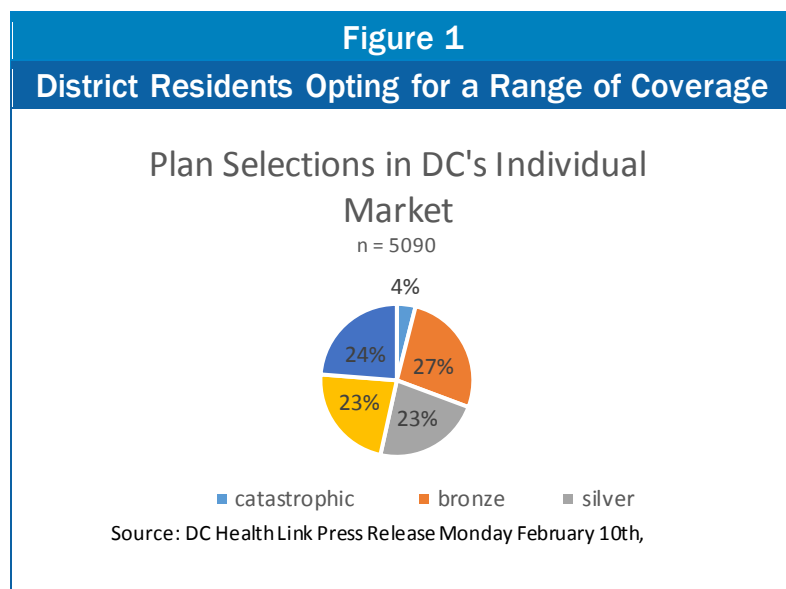
By Wes Rivers

DC's new health insurance marketplace continues to make progress toward having everyone in the District insured. More than 26,000 people have signed up for private health plans or Medicaid since October. So far, DC Health Link's plans are attracting many younger residents. But with the March 31<sup>st</sup> deadline to enroll fast approaching, DC Health Link will need to continue community-based efforts to reach all uninsured and underinsured populations.

On Monday, DC Health Link released a [report](#) showing enrollment grew by 6,000 people, or 30 percent, from the 20,000 people reported in January. The report also showed that the individuals buying coverage reflect a healthy mix of age groups — 37 percent were between ages 26 and 34. Signing up young people is important, because they are generally healthy and have avoided health insurance in the past.

The report also found that District residents are purchasing a diverse range of health plans, and generally avoiding limited plans with high-deductibles that only cover catastrophic care. **Figure 1** shows a breakdown of the plans selected by DC residents. As the plans progress from “bronze” to “platinum,” the share of expenses covered by the plan — rather than the individual — increases. In the District, residents' plan selections have been fairly evenly distributed, possibly indicating a diverse group of enrollees with diverse needs.

District residents opting away from catastrophic health plans means that the vast majority of individuals will have access to the services when they need them without bearing the bulk of the costs.



While the growth in enrollment is a positive sign, DC Health Link will have to continue intensive outreach to sign up the District's uninsured before the end of March. Prior to the exchange's roll-out, DC had 37,000 uninsured residents and 20,000 residents purchasing individual coverage directly from insurers. At 26,000 enrollees so far, DC Health Link still has a long way to go to reach both of these populations. Recently, DC Health Link formed a [partnership](#) with faith-based groups which will help connect community assister and brokers to residents each weekend during services. Community-based initiatives such as these are important to connect with the hardest-to-reach populations.

DC Health Link staff and District leaders should be applauded for their efforts to guarantee health care access for all residents. However, over the next two months, staff, volunteers, assisters and brokers must remain steadfast in order to make the District's marketplace a truly successful endeavor.