A Service of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange

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MARYLAND HEALTH CONNECTION OPENS CALL CENTER

Maryland-based call center will provide customer support for Marylanders seeking health coverage through new marketplace opening October 1

BALTIMORE (August 7, 2013) Maryland Health Connection, the state-based health insurance marketplace operated by the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, announced today that it has opened the first phase of its state-of-the-art customer call center in Baltimore to provide support for residents and small employers statewide. Representatives, including bi-lingual staff, will guide Maryland residents and small employers through their health coverage options, explain financial assistance options available including federal tax credits and cost-sharing reductions, and answer customer service questions.

Between Aug. 5 and Sept. 30, the call center will assist Marylanders with general questions about health coverage and preparations for open enrollment. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m.

"By opening the Maryland Health Connection call center, we are taking another step toward making it easier for Marylanders to get access to quality, affordable health care," said Lt. Governor Anthony Brown. **"With the October 1st launch of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange fast approaching, Maryland is prepared to continue leading the nation in the implementation of President Obama's Affordable Care Act."**

The call center will be fully operational and staffed with 125 representatives on Oct. 1, 2013, when residents can begin selecting health insurance plans through Maryland Health Connection. The call center will operate seven days a week during the open enrollment period, which ends on March 31, 2014.

A translation help line will provide translation services in 200 languages for individuals who require additional assistance and TTY service is provided for the hearing impaired. Representatives will be available during open enrollment (Oct. 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

"The new call center provides important customer support to answer general questions as we approach the October 1st launch of Maryland Health Connection and continued

support during open enrollment," said Rebecca Pearce, executive director of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. **"We understand the importance of having a live person available to answer any questions that may arise throughout the enrollment process."**

The call center is located at 1 South St. in Baltimore City. The toll-free phone number is 855-642(MHC)-8572, and 1-855-642(MHC)-8573 for TTY service. The Maryland Health Benefit Exchange is working with other state agencies, including the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Department of Human Resources, as well as consumer assistance organizations and insurance companies to ensure the appropriate hand-off procedures are implemented for transfers to other agencies and organizations in the event consumers require help with other matters. It also will employ state-of-the-art technologies for call distribution, tracking, reporting, online knowledge database and workforce management.

Following open enrollment in March 2014, the call center will be open during normal business hours to serve Maryland residents, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon.

An estimated 14 percent of Maryland's population of 5.8 million, or 800,000, are currently uninsured. The state-based insurance marketplace will provide access to financial assistance to individuals and families to reduce the cost of monthly insurance premiums and out-of-pocket costs such as copays and deductibles through Advance Premium Tax Credits and Cost Sharing Reductions. An estimated 180,000 individuals are expected to enroll in qualified health plans (QHPs) during the first year of Maryland Health Connection's operation. Statewide, nearly 100,000 Marylanders are expected to become newly eligible for Medicaid as a result of the expansion of Medicaid provided by the Affordable Care Act. Individuals who enroll through Maryland Health Connection before Dec. 18 will have coverage beginning Jan. 1, 2014.

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About Maryland Health Connection: Maryland Health Connection is the marketplace for individuals, families and small businesses to compare and enroll in health insurance, as well as determine eligibility for Medicaid and other assistance programs, federal tax credits and cost-sharing reductions. Enrollment through Maryland Health Connection is scheduled to begin in October 2013, with insurance coverage beginning Jan. 1, 2014. An estimated 180,000 individuals are expected to enroll in qualified health plans (QHPs) during the first year. Additional information about Maryland Health Connection, the enrollment process and selecting coverage can be found at www.MarylandHealthConnection.gov and on social media channels: Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/MarylandConnect; Twitter, https://twitter.com/marylandconnect and YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/marylandconnect

About Maryland Health Benefit Exchange: The Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) is a public corporation and independent unit of the State government established in April 2011 in accordance with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA). The MHBE has a nine-member Board of Trustees that includes the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland Insurance Commissioner and Executive Director of the Maryland Health Care Commission. The MHBE is responsible for the administration of the Maryland Health Connection. www.MarylandHBE.com.