Testimony before the Joint Oversight Committee of the Maryland General Assembly on the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange

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Joshua Sharfstein, Secretary of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Joint Oversight Committee on the progress made by the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and our preparations for the second open enrollment period.

Despite significant IT challenges during our initial launch, Maryland has enrolled more than 400,000 people in quality and affordable coverage since January 1. We have seen the number of charity cases in Maryland hospitals drop by more than 50%, and safety net providers such as Health Care for the Homeless have reported that where just 20% of their clientele were insured, now 80% carry insurance.

We have spent the last few months in an intense effort to upgrade the Maryland Health Connection website to provide an improved experience for Marylanders during the second open enrollment period, which begins in mid-November.

Since our last meeting, CMS has formally approved our plans to upgrade the website and we have been moving forward on all cylinders to accomplish this goal.

Today, Secretary FitzGerald will provide an update on the status of the project, including our plans to initiate anonymous browsing earlier than anticipated on November 9. She will also discuss the latest IV&V report.

Then Carolyn Quattrocki and Secretary Sharfstein will provide an operational update on preparations for this fall.