

**Media Release**

**March 3, 2020**

## MORE THAN 18,000 UNINSURED MARYLANDERS HAVE CHECKED THE BOX ON STATE TAX RETURNS TO SHARE INFORMATION FOR HEALTH COVERAGE

### *PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MARYLAND HEALTH BENEFIT EXCHANGE AND COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE OFF TO A PROMISING START*

(BALTIMORE, MD) – Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot has provided initial data to the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE), the agency that runs Maryland Health Connection, showing early success of the innovative Maryland Easy Enrollment Health Insurance Program. As of the beginning of March, more than 18,000 taxpayers have checked the box on their tax return to receive further information about enrolling in health insurance coverage, far exceeding expectations and demonstrating that many Marylanders remain uninsured.

For the first time, a question at the top of this year's state tax forms 502 and 502B asks 2020 tax filers if they want to share information, like household size and income, to determine their eligibility for free or low-cost health insurance. When taxpayers check the box, they grant permission to the Comptroller's Office to share relevant information with Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, which then mails a letter stating whether the consumer is eligible for free or low-cost coverage and outlining the easy enrollment process.

“We are thrilled that more than 18,000 people already have taken advantage of the Maryland Easy Enrollment Health Insurance Program and are taking the first step to obtain affordable health coverage. We are hopeful that the number will climb as tax-filing season continues over the next six weeks. This program makes it easy for people to sign up for insurance. We urge Marylanders without insurance to check the box on their tax return and get started on the path to quality, affordable health coverage,” said Michele Eberle, executive director of Maryland Health Benefit Exchange.

This program allows any Marylander who checks the box on their state tax return form to be eligible for a special enrollment period, even if they do not qualify for savings. Individuals will have 35 days from the date on the letter from Maryland Health Connection to sign up at [MarylandHealthConnection.gov](https://www.marylandhealthconnection.gov). There is free enrollment help available in-person and on the phone:

<https://www.marylandhealthconnection.gov/find-help/>. This is a special opportunity available only to those who file by April 15 and check the box on their tax form.

Last year, nine out of 10 Marylanders who enrolled through Maryland Health Connection received savings. This special enrollment period is for private health plans. Those who qualify for Medicaid may enroll any time of year.

“This innovative but straightforward idea shows how the government can work for the greater good of Maryland taxpayers,” said Comptroller Franchot. “A simple checkmark can help someone take that first step toward affordable health coverage, a step they may not have known how to take before. Enrolling

thousands of previously uninsured Marylanders benefits their personal health and reduces the state's burden of absorbing uninsured medical expenses.”

“We are proud that Maryland is the first state to adopt this kind of innovative approach to using the tax-filing system to enroll people in health insurance. We serve as a model for other states. There are many people who have made the Easy Enrollment program possible. Congratulations to Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and the Comptroller's Office, and thanks to Families USA and Orioles Hall of Famer Eddie Murray for all their great work in making this a success. We offer special thanks to the lead sponsors on the legislation, Senator Brian J. Feldman and Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk, as well as Governor Larry Hogan, who signed the measure into law. We are looking forward to getting more people in the state affordable health insurance,” said Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative President Vincent DeMarco.

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**Maryland Health Benefit Exchange** is a public corporation and independent unit of the state government. It was established in 2011 in accordance with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA) and is responsible for the administration of Maryland Health Connection.

**Maryland Health Connection:** One of every six Marylanders receive their health coverage through Maryland Health Connection, the state-based health insurance marketplace. Residents can compare and enroll in health insurance as well as determine eligibility for Medicaid or financial help with private plans.

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