

MEDIA RELEASE

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## **MARYLAND HEALTH BENEFIT EXCHANGE THANKS DEPARTING BOARD CHAIRMAN NEALL FOR HIS LEADERSHIP**

MARYLAND HEALTH SECRETARY RETIRING NEXT MONTH

BALTIMORE — The staff of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange commends and thanks its board chairman Robert R. Neall for his leadership and guidance as he retires from state service Dec. 1. The Maryland Secretary of Health announced his retirement last week.

“During the three years Chairman Neall led the board, the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange made strides in greater plan affordability, enrollments, marketplace competition, technology and customer service,” said Michele Eberle, executive director of MHBE, which administers the state’s health insurance marketplace. “During a period when a rise in uninsured populations challenged many states across the country, Maryland stood tall and held steady with its recent progress. We will miss his guidance and wisdom.

During Neall’s nearly three years of leadership, as chairman of its Board of Trustees, the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange:

- Experienced both enrollment growth and no increase in its uninsured rate in 2018-2019.
- Helped drive the state's uninsured rate to a historic low of 6 percent.
- Provided health coverage to more than 1.3 million Marylanders in 2020 — 1.16 million through Medicaid and 158,000 enrolled in private plans. That is about one in every five Maryland residents.
- Offered one of the first and longest special enrollment periods related to the coronavirus emergency in the nation, now nearing 90,000 enrollments since March 2020.
- Launched a novel Easy Enrollment program in 2020 that enrolled more than 4,000 people in its first year in a unique data-sharing arrangement with the Office of the Comptroller. It is now being emulated by other states.
- Gained federal approval for a Section 1332 State Innovation Waiver, with cooperation from the Maryland Insurance Administration, to create a reinsurance program that has helped lower average monthly premiums a total of 31 percent

over the past three years — among the largest rate drops in the nation.

- Introduced cutting-edge customer service technologies, including a new app for small business health coverage, an Artificial Intelligence chatbot that has answered 400,000 consumer questions, and Robotic Process Automation to improve speed and accuracy in processing applications.

Prior to being named health secretary in early 2018, Neall served as a Maryland state senator from 1996 to 2003, as Anne Arundel County executive from 1990 to 1994 and as a state delegate from 1975 to 1987.

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**Maryland Health Benefit Exchange** (MHBE), a public corporation and independent unit of state government established in 2011, administers Maryland Health Connection.

**Maryland Health Connection** (MHC) is the state-based marketplace for Marylanders to shop and enroll in health insurance, as well as determine eligibility for Medicaid and other assistance programs. It is the only place where Marylanders can access financial help such as tax credits to make coverage more affordable.