MEDIA RELEASE

MARYLAND HEALTH CONNECTION HOSTS HISPANIC HEALTH ACCESS ROUNDTABLE

In Celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, MHC Engages in Community Initiatives to Empower Community

BALTIMORE (Oct. 20, 2023) – Maryland Health Connection continues to demonstrate its commitment to fostering health equity and improving access to coverage for all communities, including the Hispanic community as Hispanic Heritage Month wraps up and Open Enrollment approaches. In a collaborative effort to engage and inform the Latino community, Maryland Health Connection hosted the Hispanic Health Access Roundtable on Oct. 17, at the Montgomery College Rockville Campus.

The Hispanic Health Access Roundtable, held in collaboration with Montgomery County Health Connection and Montgomery College, proved to be a great platform for discussing critical issues related to health access, legislation, and the expansion of coverage for the Hispanic and Spanish-speaking community. Notable panelists, including Michele Eberle, Executive Director of Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, Director of Minority Health Camille Blake-Fall and State Delegate and Chairwoman Joseline Peña-Melnyk, a passionate advocate for the Healthy Babies Equity Act, lent their expertise and insights to the discussion.

"The Hispanic Health Access Roundtable underscores our steadfast dedication to ensuring that all Maryland residents, regardless of their immigration status, have access to comprehensive health coverage," stated Eberle. 2022 saw a significant increase in insurance enrollment among the Hispanic community - a 13% increase for young adults and 9% for Hispanic consumers overall.

"For this upcoming Open Enrollment period, we are committed to providing all the needed resources so more Marylanders, including the Latino and Spanish-speaking community, are covered."

The event was hosted at Montgomery College, Maryland's only official Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) with 25% of the student body identifying as Hispanic. The interactive panel discussion engaged directly with the audience of community stakeholders and elected officials, addressing the specific needs of the Latino community. This roundtable served as a platform for a two-way dialogue, facilitating the exchange of resources and the dismantling of existing barriers to enhance health care access.

In line with its commitment to community initiatives, Maryland Health Connection proudly announced its sponsorship of the Great Halloween Lantern Parade and Festival, organized by Creative Alliance and Friends of Patterson Park, held on Oct. 21 at the Patterson Park Pulaski Monument in Baltimore City.

The Great Halloween Lantern Parade and Festival, an annual celebration and beloved Baltimore tradition, unites diverse communities through a vibrant display of lanterns, music, culinary delights, and family-friendly activities. With MHC's active involvement in the festival, attendees gained helpful information on how to access free or low-cost health insurance. In 2023, the average Maryland Health Connection customer buying private health insurance saved $319 a month on their monthly premium.

"Through local and grassroots participation in events as the Hispanic Health Access Roundtable and the Great Halloween Lantern Parade and Festival, we aim to increase overall access to health insurance to emphasize the importance of overall well-being within the communities we serve," emphasized Eberle.

Open enrollment to sign up for a 2024 health plan runs from Nov. 1, 2023, through Jan. 15, 2024. All plans available through Maryland Health Connection cover important health benefits, including doctor visits, prescriptions, mental health services, and more. These plans and prices are for private plans only. Those who qualify for Medicaid may enroll any time of year.

Maryland Health Benefit Exchange remains committed to facilitating accessible and inclusive health care services for all Maryland residents, including the Hispanic community.

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.

MEDIA CONTACT:
Betsy Plunkett, Director, Marketing & Web Strategies betsy.plunkett@maryland.gov