

Written Testimony before the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Ways
and Means' Oversight Subcommittee

Hearing Entitled "Maximizing Health Coverage Enrollment Amidst Administration Sabotage"

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Chief Executive Officer
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Dear Chairman Pascrell, Ranking Member Kelly, and Subcommittee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the health insurance exchange and Coloradans who rely on getting their coverage through the individual health insurance market. My name is Kevin Patterson, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Connect for Health Colorado®, the official health insurance marketplace for Colorado.

At Connect for Health Colorado, our mission is to increase access, affordability, and choice for individuals, families and small employers purchasing health insurance. I am proud of the innovation and collaboration in our state among lawmakers, residents, community organizations, businesses, advocates, state agencies, and our Marketplace to steadily reduce the uninsured rate and increase enrollments. I am pleased to share more with you today about our achievements as a state-based marketplace and how this unique position allows us to expand health coverage to the people of Colorado.

Since we opened for business in 2013, we have helped hundreds of thousands of Coloradans get the coverage they need to protect their health and livelihood. As noted in Appendix A at the end of the testimony, our Colorado marketplace, or "exchange," has facilitated more than 1 million medical plan enrollments so far. Just last year, Coloradans received more than 700 million dollars total in federal tax credits through our Marketplace. However, Colorado's path to increasing access to affordable health care and choice started years before the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). In 2006, a bipartisan group of state lawmakers created the Blue Ribbon Commission for Health Care Reform to study models for comprehensive reform under then Republican Governor Bill Owens. With the passage of the ACA in March 2010, the Colorado state legislature passed a bipartisan bill creating the Colorado Health Benefit Exchange (COHBE) as a public, nonprofit entity that has a bipartisan legislative oversight committee as well as board members that are appointed by the governor and both Democratic and Republican members of the legislature.

I joined Connect for Health Colorado as Chief Executive Officer in April 2015. I recall my arrival at the exchange happened around the time that the Colorado Health Institute announced that the creation of Connect for Health Colorado and the expansion of Medicaid coverage reduced the state's uninsured rate by half to a record 6.7 percent- one of the lowest in the country. Charged with further increasing access, affordability and choice for residents in every corner of the state, I knew we had to prioritize meeting people where they are. Whether I'm having a conversation with a single mom in Denver or a farmer on the Eastern Plains, I and the rest of the Connect for Health Colorado team are listening and learning from Coloradans about viable solutions for accessing health care in their community. Over the years, we have gotten to know residents and their unique needs by strengthening the partnerships in urban and rural communities among our certified brokers, health coverage guides and certified application counselors. As shown in Appendix B, we have nearly one thousand people on the ground helping Coloradans on behalf of our Marketplace.

Generally, every year around this time, I hit the road and visit many rural communities around the state to hear updates from communities and share insights about the upcoming Open Enrollment Period. This year, the challenges of face-to-face visits are leading me to have these conversations virtually. The staff also delivered an entirely virtual CoverCO conference this year to help prepare brokers, assisters, county workers, and community organizations for the upcoming open enrollment period. I'm thankful for the opportunity to still "see" our partners, community leaders and local policy makers outside of Denver. This year, we were able to adapt to a virtual work world and keep our relationships strong.

Since our inception, we have funded our navigator program in Colorado, which we call our Assistance Network, at approximately two million dollars per year. The Assistance Network is measured on their appointment and outreach activities and is integral to our success enrolling customers and providing health insurance literacy. Our Assistance Sites located in rural counties have built relationships with local, small businesses, the regional hospitals and surrounding rural communities. Their work is vital to our ability to reach especially vulnerable populations who often experience complicated life situations. Successful outreach at one site led a hearing-impaired customer, who had been without coverage for five years, to seek help from an Assister. He had multiple health issues and was going without a prescribed medication. After meeting with the Assister, he understood which plans met his needs, got enrolled and moved forward with getting the care he had delayed.

The current, ongoing public health emergency has underscored the value of our relationships with our Assistance Network and local counties, as well as the flexibility we wield as a state-based marketplace. In mid-March of this year, we made the decision to open an emergency Special Enrollment Period in response to COVID-19, to ensure as many Coloradans as possible had access to affordable health care. In early April, the Adams County commissioners reached out to me and informed me that their constituents were still experiencing furloughs and layoffs as a result of efforts to combat the coronavirus. We were able to consider and ultimately accommodate their request to extend the emergency Special Enrollment Period through the end of the month. Our Assistance Network was ready to field questions from those unexpectedly without coverage and help them enroll. Due to this long-term investment in and partnership with the community-based organizations, Connect for Health Colorado has

created a source of support for our customers, as well as an important resource for feedback about the implementation of health reform throughout Colorado.

Connect for Health Colorado continually explores ways to expand coverage, choice and access in collaboration with policymakers and advocates. We supported and will be integral in the implementation of two new programs that passed this year, the Health Care Coverage Easy Enrollment Program and the Health Insurance Affordability Enterprise. I am excited that we can extend access to affordable health coverage for Coloradans with the simple act of checking a box. Through legislation such as Easy Enrollment, we work toward our goals of reducing the uninsured rate and educating Coloradans on the financial help we provide.

With the Enterprise fund, I am looking forward to greater stability in costs due to the reinsurance program and to providing coverage and financial help to thousands more Coloradans who are still struggling to access coverage. Appendix C details how the implementation of the reinsurance program stabilized costs, especially for consumers who do not qualify for financial help. As in the case of a young Durango couple, who are small business owners, the reinsurance program was an integral part in getting them covered and saving their new family over \$8,600 a year in premium payments. We know that with job loss and income instability at an all-time high in our state, it is more important than ever that we remove barriers to health care by providing portable and affordable coverage options, like those offered through our Marketplace.

Amid the challenges we face each year as a state-based marketplace, I am encouraged by the fact that we have the flexibility, critical relationships, and proven capability to ensure our residents can access the coverage that they need. I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony before the Subcommittee as well as oral testimony.

Sincerely,

Kevin Patterson
Chief Executive Officer
Connect for Health Colorado®

Appendix A

The chart below outlines Connect for Health Colorado® medical plan enrollments during the Open Enrollment Period for plan (calendar) years 2014-2020.

ACA Open Enrollment Year	Plan Year	Medical Plan Enrollments during the Open Enrollment Period
1	2014	127,000+
2	2015	141,600+
3	2016	169,000+
4	2017	178,000+
5	2018	165,777
6	2019	170,741
7	2020	166,850*

*Does not include the additional **14,263** Coloradans who signed up for health insurance coverage during Connect for Health Colorado's emergency Special Enrollment Period, which ran from March 20, 2020 to April 30, 2020. The Colorado exchange opened the Special Enrollment Period in response to the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Since Connect for Health Colorado opened for business in 2013, Coloradans have received federal tax credits through the Marketplace to lower the cost of their health insurance and which can be invested back into the community.

Plan Year	Federal Tax Credits Received to Reduce Marketplace Premiums
2014	\$251,000,000
2015	\$184,000,000
2016	\$318,000,000
2017	\$391,000,000
2018	\$616,000,000
2019	\$721,326,548

Appendix B

Connect for Health Colorado publishes monthly updates on total medical enrollments on our website [ConnectforHealthCO.com](https://connectforhealthco.com). We also publish an annual report that includes detailed information about changes to premium costs and financial help by county. Following are highlights of the Marketplace this year.

Colorado's Marketplace-- By the Numbers:

- **668** licensed, train and certified Brokers.
 - 46 percent of our customers enrolled with the help of a trained and certified Broker.
- 45 Assistance Network Sites with **291** trained and certified Health Coverage Guides.
 - 6 percent of our customers enrolled with the help of a community-based Assister.
- **74 percent** of customers qualified for financial help to reduce the monthly cost of health insurance.
- In 2019, Coloradans received **\$721,326,548** in federal premium tax credits through our Marketplace.
- Statewide rates for full price premiums dropped by **20 percent** for 2020 coverage due to the reinsurance program, which led to an uptick in enrollments in rural communities.
- In 2020, **eight** health insurance companies offer a total of **130** health plans through the Marketplace.

Appendix C

Non-financially assisted customers saw decreases in their monthly premiums starting in 2020 as a result of the state's reinsurance program. Premiums for 2021 health insurance remain stable in Colorado, largely due to the reinsurance program and increased issuer choice in rural areas.

Costs at a Glance: 2017-2020

Average Monthly Selected Plan Costs

- Financially Assisted: Full Cost
- Non-Financially Assisted: Full Cost
- Financially Assisted: Cost **after** Financial Help

