

A Record of Success: Policy and Advocacy Accomplishments: 2010 - 2017

Consumer Health First (CHF) incorporated in 2016 as a 501(c)(3) after a decade of operations as the Maryland Women's Coalition for Health Care Reform. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors with the mission to *seek solutions and advance reforms that promote health equity through access to high-quality, comprehensive and affordable health care.*

Since passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010, CHF has played a key role to **ensure that consumers are at the center of all health care-related legislation, regulation and policy.** Our work encompasses the full spectrum of health care reform with an impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of Marylanders.

ACA Implementation - Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE)

- 2016/17: Launched the ***Health Care. Keep It!*** campaign as an on-going effort to address ACA "repeal and replace" efforts and mitigate any state actions that would reverse advances made in Maryland.
- 2011 - 2017: Provided **comments to State and Federal agencies on a diversity of regulation and policies** and served on dozens of advisory committees related to the Maryland Health Connection IT platform and integration of Medicaid; Essential Health Benefits package; producers; SHOP; plan certification standards; network adequacy; etc.
- 2011 - 2017: Lead role in the drafting and passage of **Maryland statutes** for implementation of the ACA with incorporation of CHF amendments including those on Maryland's consumer assistance program, continuity of care provisions, and establishment of a permanent Standing Advisory Committee.
- 2010: Developed the ***Health Care. Get It!*** campaign as a platform to raise public awareness of the ACA and how to access its benefits.

Access to Health Care Services - Maryland Department of Health (MDH)

CHF has worked on many fronts and with a diversity of partners to ensure that health care services are available, particularly for vulnerable populations. This work included:

- 2017: Gained passage of significant pieces of legislation to address potential changes in the ACA, such as the ACA Commission establishment and the **Family Planning Services Act - Continuity of Care** to ensure Medicaid coverage for family planning services should Congress cut Planned Parenthood funding.
- 2015/16: Ensuring that **Essential Community Providers** were included as a category for network adequacy purposes.
- 2014: At the request of DHMH, developing and facilitating **three forums designed to identify challenges in obtaining behavioral health services** in rural counties - Allegany, Charles, and Dorchester. Each was attended by more than 48 key stakeholders in each county.

Delivery System Transformation - Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) & Maryland Department of Health (MDH)

- 2016 - 2017: CHF served on the HSCRC Advisory Council to provide the **consumer perspective** as the second phase of the Model (Progression Plan and Primary Care Model) was drafted. At HSCRC's request, CHF prepared the consumer engagement section of the Progression Model submitted to CMS in 2016. The emphasis was on the participation of consumers at every level from policy and design to implementation.
- 2015: CHF President led the HSCRC **Consumer Engagement Task Force** which recommended the establishment of a **Consumer-Standing Advisory Committee**.
- 2014 - 2017: CHF leadership serve on the **HSCRC Advisory Council, Consumer-Standing Advisory Committee, and Work Groups** focused on the design and implementation of Maryland's unique All-Payer Model

Health Equity

- Published the issue brief, *Health Equity: The Promise of Health Care Reform - An Update on Opportunities and Challenges in Maryland* that was provided to elected officials, policy makers and stakeholder organizations and partners.
- Hosted **Health Care. Women of Color Get It Conference** in partnership with Morgan State University School of Community Health and Policy and others that was attended by more than 100 individuals.

Health Literacy/Consumer Engagement

- **Health literacy materials for consumers:**
 - Produced and distributed through CHF website, the Maryland Department of Health, MHBE, and community-based organizations a variety of health care resources for a general audience and specific populations including those with substance use disorder, as well as the LGBTQ and HIV/ AIDS populations; and pregnant women.
 - Worked with Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need (RWV) to develop [My Health. My Voice. health care literacy materials](#).
 - Collaborated with the Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County on the development of its [Destination Health](#) project.
 - Advised the Maryland Hospital Association on its patient-centered resource campaign - [A Breath of Fresh Care](#).
- **Consumer Engagement:** CHF Board President chaired the Health Services and Cost Review Commission's **Consumer Engagement Task Force** for Maryland's unique delivery system transformation (All-Payer Model). Its [Final report](#), released in September 2015, included recommendations on creation of a statewide education campaign and the establishment of meaningful consumer engagement.

Medicaid - Maryland Department of Health (MDH)

- 2017: Organize and manage the **Maryland Medicaid Collaborative** comprised of twenty lead organizations that represent the populations served by the program to address and/or mitigate any proposed alterations to the Medicaid program at either the state or federal level.
2010 - 2017: Organized **advocacy efforts** to address ACA-mandated expansion and issues including individuals losing coverage due to redetermination issues and a consumer-friendly grievance and appeals process.

Member and Partner Services

CHF serves as the primary resource for comprehensive and timely information on Maryland's healthcare reform initiatives. This includes:

- Maintaining **website** cited as the "go to site" for information and resources (to date in 2017, visits to the site are up 263.4% over 2016)

- Distributing weekly **e-letters** with the most current information to almost 2,500 individuals
- Annual **symposium and webinars** on timely topics with attendance over 100 people
- Preparation of **educational resource materials** that are distributed through web-based channels, at CHF-sponsored and public events
- **Presentations** throughout the state and for national organizations.

Network Adequacy & Adequate Provider Directories - Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA)

- 2016/2017: Conducted research and worked with other advocates to provide testimony and recommendations to the MIA for **network adequacy regulations**. If finalized as currently written they will be among the strongest in the country.

2015/16: CHF researched and published its [Network Adequacy in Maryland Report](#) on the adequacy of OB/GYNs. With other advocacy organizations, CHF used the findings and recommendations to gain passage of legislation requiring network adequacy standards to be established by the MIA.

Review of Requested Health Insurance Rates - Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA)

CHF has been the sole policy organization to conduct an annual analysis of proposed rates and provide testimony before the MIA to support approval of rates that are reasonable and affordable. There has been mixed success in this area for a number of reasons. However, insurers have yet to receive their full requests, and CHF continues to advocate for a more rigorous rate review and transparent process.

State and National Collaborations- CHF partners with a diversity of state policy and advocacy organizations and serves as a resource to, national organizations, such as Families USA, Community Catalyst, Consumers Union, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Urban Institute, National Health Law Program, Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need, and the National Women's Law Center.

Awards - CHF has received recognition from both state and national organizations for its success in raising the voices, and advocating for the interests, of consumers in Maryland. This has included the receipt by its President of the Families USA 2015 Consumer Health Advocate of the Year Award.