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Governor Kaine Announces Formation of Virginia Health Exchange Network
– Partners with Availity for Web Portal Designed to Lower Health Care Administrative Costs –

RICHMOND – Governor Timothy M. Kaine today announced the creation of the Virginia Health Exchange Network (VHEN). VHEN's secure web portal will connect Virginia health plans, health systems, and state agencies to standardize and streamline health care administrative transactions. By establishing a single collaborative network, VHEN is expected to lower costs and improve overall service quality across the Commonwealth.

"Virginia has already demonstrated we can be a leader in the health technology field – VHEN places the Commonwealth at the front of the pack by implementing measurable and relevant changes to our health care infrastructure," Governor Kaine said. "More broadly, the agreement between Virginia health plans – both public and private – demonstrates our commitment to the President's call to reduce health care costs nationwide."

Following a competitive evaluation and selection process, Availity, LLC has been chosen to partner with VHEN to provide Virginia's physicians, hospitals, and allied health care providers with eligibility and benefits for individual patients through the Availity® Health Information Network.

Most private health plans and public payers are expected to participate in the VHEN program, which allows health care providers to determine eligibility status, level of benefits, and other critical information in real-time through a secure web portal. By using a single web portal across the Commonwealth, the system should eliminate paperwork and unnecessary phone calls, while helping providers and their support staff become more efficient in their daily work flow.

The network also provides a platform for expansion into other services, including populating health records and financial management. Future plans include identifying a real-time solution to identify patient insurance coverage when it may be unknown or unavailable so that health care benefits can be accessed more easily.

"The health plan members of VHEN are thrilled to be able to offer this service to health care providers in Virginia," said C. Burke King, president, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield. "By bringing together health plans, provider networks, and hospital systems from around the Commonwealth, we are building a foundation for health care quality improvement and administrative simplification, allowing providers to focus on patients, not paperwork."

"Administrative transactions represent the low-hanging fruit of health care information technology and we are very pleased with the spirit of collaboration that has been demonstrated by the health plan and provider community in Virginia to find and pursue opportunities for mutual cost-saving – now it's time for us to deliver together," said John Duval, CEO of Medical College of Virginia Hospitals of VCU Medical Center and Secretary/Treasurer of the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association.

"Information technology is a critical component to health care reform, creating opportunities to improve health quality and control costs for patients, physicians, and health plans," said Julie Klapstein, Chief Executive Officer at Availity. "Availity has worked hard to optimize efficiencies and cost savings in the physician and health plan relationships. This public/private community collaborative creates great opportunities for Virginia to lead in administrative simplification and health IT."

"Our community has devoted significant time and attention to administrative simplification. The kind of effort being launched in Virginia is what is needed to make getting medical care and providing medical care simpler and less costly," said America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP) President and CEO Karen Ignagni. "Very soon, we will be announcing pilot projects in two other states with health plans and physicians working together."

For more information on VHEN, please visit: <http://www.healthitcouncil.vi.virginia.gov/vhen.shtml>.

For more information on Availity, please visit: www.availity.com.