



STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
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LT. GOVERNOR

October 14, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
7500 Security Blvd.
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Secretary Azar and Administrator Verma,

As conveyed previously, the state of Michigan is taking unprecedented steps in the face of the worst public health crisis in modern history to protect the people of our state from the coronavirus pandemic and the economic devastation occurring in its wake. We have taken the step of waiving co-payments for coronavirus-related testing and treatment through our Medicaid programs and received commitments from 92% of the commercial health insurance market in Michigan to do the same. However, more needs to be done to increase access to affordable health care during this crisis. To that end, we would ask you to extend the 2021 Health Insurance Marketplace open enrollment period through the end of January 2021 so that people can enroll in the coverage they need during this challenging time.

Too many Michiganders are uninsured or underinsured despite the steps we have taken at the state level. No Michiganders should forgo seeking the care they need, including care related to COVID-19, because of fear of the potential costs to themselves and their families, especially during a pandemic. Not only is this unacceptable, it is also dangerous as it undermines our ability to stop the spread of COVID-19. As you know, widespread testing is one of the most important tools we have as a country to get this virus under control. Testing allows us to identify where the virus is and where to allocate resources to prevent spread and ensure treatment for those who have been infected.

It is essential that we remove every barrier as quickly as possible to ensure those in Michigan and across the country are able to access the treatment they need. One of the most effective ways this can be done is by extending the Marketplace open enrollment period to give people more time to enroll in a health plan that offers the coverage they need with access to any qualifying subsidies.

Our health experts in Michigan have warned that we may be headed into a second wave of this pandemic. Taking every step possible to expand access to health insurance is not just a responsible choice for the health of each individual, but also for the health of our communities, our state, and the country. Michigan has done and will continue to do everything we can for our residents, and we hope that you will take all the necessary steps that only you can for them as well.

We thank you for your careful attention to this matter and hope that you will act swiftly to extend the 2021 open enrollment period.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Whitmer
Governor of Michigan

Anita Fox
Director, Michigan Department of Financial and Insurance
Services