



April 13, 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:

In the face of the worst public health crisis in modern history, we as governors are taking unprecedented steps to protect the people of our states from the coronavirus pandemic and the economic devastation occurring in its wake. Many of our states have taken the step of waiving co-payments for coronavirus-related testing and treatment through our Medicaid programs and have encouraged our private insurers to do the same. We all know that more needs to be done to increase access to affordable health care during this crisis, however. To that end, we would ask that you reconsider your decision and immediately open a special enrollment period of at least 30 days on the federal health care exchange. A special enrollment period would ensure individuals in the 38 states on the federal exchange, in addition to those who already qualify, can purchase the coverage they need during this challenging time.

Too many of our constituents are uninsured or underinsured despite the steps we've taken at the state level. As a result, far too many of our residents are choosing to forgo coronavirus testing and treatment out of fear of the potential costs to themselves and their families at a time of increasing economic distress. Not only is this unacceptable, it's also dangerous as it undermines our ability as a nation to stop the spread of COVID-19. As you know, one of the most important tools we have as a country to get this virus under control is widespread testing. 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 our states and across the country are able to access the treatment they need. One of the most effective ways this can be done is by opening up a federal special enrollment period to give everyone the chance to enroll in a health plan that offers the coverage they need with access to any qualifying subsidies.

In a time of a fast-moving pandemic, taking every step possible to expand access to health insurance is not just a responsible choice for the health of the individual, but also for the health of our communities, our states, and the country. We as governors have 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 allow for a special enrollment period.

Sincerely,



Governor Gretchen Whitmer
State of Michigan



Governor JB Pritzker
State of Illinois



Governor Steve Bullock
State of Montana



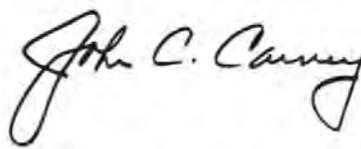
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State of New Mexico



Governor Kate Brown
State of Oregon



Governor Ralph Northam
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