

March 20, 2020

Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

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

Mike Pence
Vice President
White House Special Task Force
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretary Azar, Administrator Verma, and Vice President Pence,

With the burgeoning nationwide spread of COVID-19, the Department of Health and Human Services must use all the tools at its disposal to combat the growing crisis. This letter focuses on one agenda item among many: **creating an Emergency, 60-Day Special Enrollment Period**, in both healthcare.gov and state-based exchanges.

Maximizing enrollment of the uninsured into coverage for which they qualify is a critically important strategy for addressing the current pandemic. Disease is typically detected when symptomatic consumers seek care. Consumers without insurance face cost barriers that delay their receipt of necessary care until illness worsens. During the current pandemic, this delays detection and treatment of COVID-19, accelerating the disease's spread.

It is thus no surprise that many states that operate their own exchanges, including Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, and Washington, have already created emergency SEPs. We urge the Department to give Americans who live in the 38 states served by the HealthCare.Gov platform similar access to coverage and care.

The emergency SEP should be open to anyone who wishes to enroll. Limiting the SEP to defined groups who must verify eligibility would not only delay care receipt, it would deter enrollment by healthy consumers, endangering the individual-market risk pool. Additionally, the Department should waive any verification processes that would only delay critical access to coverage. The rapid commencement of treatment also requires an expedited effectuation date, coverage should begin as soon as possible, regardless of when plan selection occurs.

In order to get the word out to consumers the Department should invest significant resources in educating the public about this SEP through digital and television ads. Additionally, the Department should create materials in multiple languages, accessible formats for people with disabilities, and resources for hard-to-reach populations to give diverse populations access to this SEP. Engaging application assisters to help consumers sign up would make the SEP much more successful in reaching its goals. Finally, given the likelihood of rising unemployment and uncertainty among hourly workers, the Department should also focus significant outreach and advertising efforts to employers and employees most at-risk of losing employer-based coverage. These are all important first steps in enrolling the uninsured to limit the scope of the current public health crisis.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days

ABLE NH (Advocates Building Lasting Equality in NH)

ACA Consumer Advocacy

ACCESS (Michigan)

Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago

Advocates for Youth

African Services Committee

AIDS Foundation of Chicago

Alaska Children's Trust

Alliance for a Just Society

American Association on Health and Disability

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Diabetes Association

American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees

American Federation of Teachers

American Medical Student Association

American Muslim Health Professionals

American Psychological Association

Arcora Foundation

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Bi-State Primary Care Association
Black Women's Health Imperative
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
Catalyst Miami
Center for Health Progress
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
Center for Patient Partnerships
Center for Popular Democracy
Center for Public Policy Priorities (Texas)
Central Virginia Health Services
Champaign County Health Care Consumers
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
Children's Action Alliance
Children's Defense Fund - Texas
Circle Up, United Methodist Women for Moms
Citizen Action of New York
Citizen Action of Wisconsin
Clare Housing
Clay-Battelle Health Services Association
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
Community Catalyst
Community Dental Health NPO
Consumers for Affordable Health Care
Covering Wisconsin
Detroit Community Solutions
Empire Justice Center

End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin
Epilepsy Florida
Equal Hope
EverThrive Illinois
Faith in Public Life
Families USA
Family and Child Treatment of Southern Nevada
Family Voices of Tennessee
FamilyCare
Farmworker Justice
First Focus on Children
Florida ADAPT
Foley Waite LLC, NJMSA
Foundation Communities Prosper Centers
Future Smiles
Gay Men's Health Crisis, Inc
Georgia Budget and Policy Institute
Georgia Watch
Georgians for a Healthy Future
Get America Covered
GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer
Health & Medicine Policy Research Group
Health Care for All Massachusetts
Health Care for All New York
Health Care Voter
Hometown Action
Houston Health Department
HRCHC - Hope Rising
Human Rights Campaign
Illinois Academy of Family Physicians
Illinois Action for Children

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Illinois Primary Health Care Association
Illinois Public Health Institute
Indivisible
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Jen Mishory, Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation
Justice in Aging
Kentucky Equal Justice Center
Kentucky Voices for Health
KidCare Coalition of Miami-Dade
Lakeshore Foundation
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
Latino Outreach of New Jersey
Legacy Community Health Services
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Maine Equal Justice
Manatee Children's Services
Manatee County Habitat for Humanity
March for Moms
March of Dimes
MaryCatherine Jones Consulting, LLC
Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative
Medicaid-Medicare-CHIP Services Dental Association
Medicare Rights Center
Michigan Oral Health Coalition
Mississippi Center for Justice
Missouri Health Care For All
Missouri Rural Crisis Center
Monroe Health Center
Montana Women Vote
NAMI Texas

National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of Social Workers – Texas
Chapter
National Council of Jewish Women
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health
Association
National Health Council
National Health Law Program
National Institute for Reproductive Health (NIRH)
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Women's Health Network
Nebraska Appleseed
New Futures
New Hampshire Nurses Association
New Jersey Citizen Action
New Voices for Reproductive Justice
New York Immigration Coalition
North Carolina AIDS Action Network
North Carolina Child
Northwest Health Law Advocates
Oklahoma Policy Institute
OneAmerica
Out2Enroll
Palmetto Project
Partnership for Children's Oral Health
PDI Surgery Center
Pennsylvania Health Access Network
People's Action
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
PolicyRx
Power to Decide

Preston-Taylor Community Health Centers, Inc.
Prevention Access Campaign
Primary Care Access Network (PCAN)
ProHealth TES
Protect Our Care Illinois
Protect our Care New Hampshire
Public Citizen
Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need
Senior Mobile Dental
Shea Writing and Training Solutions, Inc.
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Sight & Sound Care LLC
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center
Southern Vermont Area Health Education Center
TakeAction Minnesota
TeethFirst
Tennessee Disability Coalition
Tennessee Health Care Campaign
Tennessee Justice Center
Texas Association of Community Health Centers, Inc.
Texas Nurses Association
The Actors Fund
The American Institute of Dental Public Health
The Bingham Program
The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis
The Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, Inc.
The Kidz Club Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care
Center
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health
The Praxis Project
The Rhode Island JASYCEE Alliance
Treatment Action Group

Triage Cancer
Trinity Health
Trust for America's Health
UHCAN Ohio
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
United Action for Idaho
United Vision for Idaho
United Way of Dane County
United Way of Williamson County
United Way Worldwide
United Ways of Texas
Utah Health Policy Project
Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations
Virginia Health Catalyst
Virginia Organizing
Virginia Poverty Law Center
Voices for Vermont's Children
Washington CAN
Washtenaw Health Plan
West Central Initiative
West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy
West Virginia Citizen Action
West Virginia FREE
West Virginians for Affordable Health Care
Whole Child Manatee
Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Women's Health and Family Planning Association of
Texas
Young Invincibles