



KATE BROWN  
Governor

March 23, 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 of today, Oregon is urgently experiencing the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic with 191 confirmed cases, and tragically, five deaths.

On March 8, 2020, I declared a state of emergency and a public health emergency across Oregon. We have used state resources to help affected people and communities. We have also partnered with our insurance carriers to cover the cost of testing and waive cost-sharing requirements for treatment for those who are fully insured. However, more can be done to ensure that every person has meaningful access to testing and treatment during this crisis.

Many Oregonians are uninsured or underinsured and now find their families' budgets significantly tightened due to this national emergency. In order to remove any potential barriers that remain, it is critical for all Oregonians to have access to a special enrollment period (SEP) so uninsured and underinsured people can enroll in health coverage and access subsidies for which they may qualify. I urge you to open up an SEP of at least 30 days and for coverage to be effective as soon as possible.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to health insurance helps all Oregonians. The Trump Administration has stressed the value of allowing Americans to make their own coverage choices. During open enrollment last fall, a moderate-income adult might have made a rational decision to skip coverage or buy one of the extremely limited, short-term plans now available under federal rules that currently are not required to cover testing for COVID-19 and waive cost-sharing for COVID-19 treatment. A national emergency has changed conditions vastly, and those Oregonians deserve a chance to get the coverage they need. When people have coverage, care is better coordinated, and that is critical for the stability of our health care system during this national emergency.

Thank you for your attention to this important and emergent issue as we partner together in keeping Oregonians healthy and safe.

Sincerely

Governor Kate Brown

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