



KATE BROWN
Governor

November 18, 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,

Many Americans have been dealt a difficult blow by 2020; Oregon is no exception. This particularly difficult year included the COVID-19 pandemic and devastating wildfires. These challenges have contributed to struggles never before seen throughout our state.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about economic hardships to many Oregonians. Currently, about 45,000 more Oregonians are receiving unemployment benefits than this time last year. Many of these Oregonians must consider their health coverage options during open enrollment. With many insurance agents and application assisters working remotely and a lack of enrollment events occurring due to the pandemic, the limited time frame increases the stress and uncertainty on those who need help.

In addition, more than 4,000 families have lost their homes in Oregon's destructive wildfires. These people are scrambling to secure stable housing and other necessities for their families. For the families and business owners affected by the wildfires in Oregon, health coverage is one of many things on a task list that need to be completed before the end of the year.

It is extremely important that people in Oregon and throughout the United States are able to access quality, affordable coverage to protect their health and financial well-being for the new year. Extending the Health Insurance Marketplace open enrollment period through Dec. 31, 2020, would give more people time to enroll with the guidance and assistance of a health insurance expert. Ensuring access to health coverage during this ongoing national pandemic is not only responsible, but necessary. This would ensure citizens throughout the country are able to work toward a greater future.

Thank you for your attention to this request. We hope you will extend immediately the 2021 open enrollment period.

Sincerely,

Governor Kate Brown