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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Files Medicaid Waiver For MassHealth Flexibility, Provides Update On Launch Of New Unemployment System

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

4/24/2020

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Governor's Press Office

Department of Public Health

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

MEDIA CONTACT

Sarah Finlaw, Press Secretary, Governor's Office

Phone

(617) 725-4025 (tel:6177254025)

Online

gov.press@state.ma.us (mailto:gov.press@state.ma.us)

BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today announced new federal waiver requests to provide the state's MassHealth program more flexibility to respond to COVID-

19, and provided an update on Massachusetts' successful implementation of the new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program.

MassHealth Waiver Requests: Massachusetts is filing two waiver requests with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that will give the state and its Medicaid program, MassHealth, more flexibility to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency. If allowed, the waivers will build upon the two **previously submitted waivers** (/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-new-health-care-resources-small-business-relief-other) and enable MassHealth to deliver the most effective care to its members and support health care providers.

Through these waiver requests, the Commonwealth is seeking flexibility to address key areas of need:

- Expand Medicare telehealth coverage to include services provided by phone and video, to increase access to health care for seniors and individuals with disabilities without readily accessible video technology. This expansion is consistent with telehealth coverage currently provided by MassHealth and commercial plans.
- Allow MassHealth to waive the requirement that certain applicants and members spend down to qualify for coverage in cases of financial hardship.
- Extend retroactive coverage for individuals who qualify for MassHealth to allow individuals to be covered up to 90 days prior to submitting their application.
- Provide flexibility for federal provider payment limits to enable MassHealth to provide critical stabilization funds to health care providers.
- Ease provider requirements that could result in unnecessary administrative burdens or barriers to care.

PUA Unemployment System Launch: Earlier this week, Massachusetts became one of the first states in the nation to successfully implement the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program established by the federal CARES Act. This program provides benefits for individuals who do not qualify for traditional unemployment benefits, but have lost their jobs due to COVID-19.

The platform launched on April 20, 10 days ahead of the previously scheduled launch date. Since then, the PUA system has so far processed well over 100,000 claims, and benefit checks, which include an additional $600 as part of another federal CARES Act benefit implemented by the administration, are already being issued.

Visit **www.mass.gov/pua** (/pua) to learn more and apply.

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Media Contact

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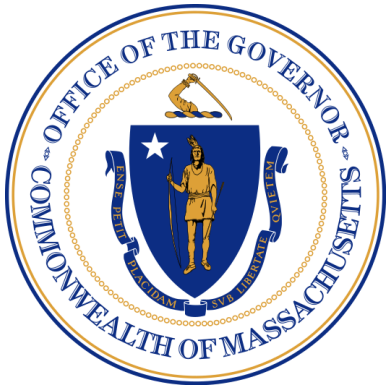

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

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Governor Charlie Baker, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito and the Baker-Polito Administration are working to respond to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak and keep Massachusetts residents safe and healthy

keep Massachusetts residents safe and healthy.

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Department of Public Health (/orgs/department-of-public-health)

DPH promotes the health and well-being of all residents by ensuring access to high-quality public health and healthcare services, and by focusing on prevention, wellness, and health equity in all people.

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Executive Office of Health and Human Services

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The Executive Office of Health and Human Services is the largest secretariat in state government and is comprised of 12 agencies, in addition to 2 soldiers' homes

and the MassHealth program. Our efforts are focused on the health, resilience, and independence of the one in four residents of the Commonwealth we serve. Our public health programs touch every community in the Commonwealth.

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THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

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EOLWD manages the Commonwealth's workforce development and labor departments to ensure that workers, employers, and the unemployed have the tools and training needed to succeed in the Massachusetts economy.

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