



July 17, 2020

The Honorable Brian Kemp
206 Washington Street
Suite 203, State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Governor Kemp:

The undersigned organizations represent millions of individuals facing serious, acute and chronic health conditions in Georgia. As you know, the state released a new version of its Section 1332 waiver application on July 9. This application is materially different from the one that preceded it, which itself was materially different from the initial draft of the application (the only version of these sweeping proposals on which the state permitted public comment, back in the fall of 2019). We write today to express our serious concerns with the proposals contained in the new application, and with the insufficient amount of time that the state has allotted for the public, in the midst of a pandemic, to provide input. We respectfully request that you extend the comment period on the state's Section 1332 waiver application to at least 30 days.

While the application released on July 9 removes several policies that our organizations have previously opposed, we remain deeply concerned that the Georgia Access Model, as currently envisioned, will jeopardize access to quality and affordable healthcare coverage for patients with pre-existing conditions. Under the Georgia Access Model, the state would deny Georgians the freedom to enroll in coverage through Healthcare.gov and instead require that they use insurers, brokers, and private websites (options available to them already). This plan increases the risk that people will enroll in coverage with inadequate benefits through private entities that may not help patients choose the best plan for their health needs.

A fifteen-day comment period is not sufficient to solicit meaningful comments on a proposal that would have such a substantial impact on access to care for patients in Georgia. A change of this significance should be subject to a full comment period of at least 30 days to ensure that stakeholders, including the healthcare industry, patients and consumers and other interested parties, are able to adequately respond to the request for comment.

Since the state released the first, now outdated, version of its waiver application last year, COVID-19 has overwhelmed our healthcare system and highlighted that the need for adequate and affordable health insurance coverage more than ever. If someone without health insurance contracts the COVID-19 virus, they may be forced to make the difficult decision to not be tested and treated due to fears about the cost of care. That puts all Georgians – particularly the people we represent – at risk. The state’s proposals are not directly related to COVID-19 and not slated to take effect until 2022. We ask that the state reconsider its decision to cut short the public comment period on the new application and instead allow additional time to facilitate public review of and input on these important proposals.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American Heart Association

American Lung Association

Arthritis Foundation

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

Epilepsy Foundation

Georgia Equality

Georgians for a Healthy Future

Hemophilia Federation of America

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

National Hemophilia Foundation

National Multiple Sclerosis Society

National Organization for Rare Disorders

National Patient Advocate Foundation

Protect Our Care Georgia