

Massachusetts Health Connector extends open enrollment until March 23

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Residents who need to buy health insurance will now have until March 23 to get coverage through the Massachusetts Health Connector's open enrollment period, the Connector announced Friday. Open enrollment was originally scheduled to end Saturday and the Connector said the two-month extension will give people, particularly those harmed economically by the COVID-19 pandemic, extra time to make sure they are covered.

"Having health insurance means having the peace of mind that if sick or injured, access to health care and services is readily available," Louis Gutierrez, executive director of the Health Connector, said. "Hopefully those who don't have coverage can take advantage of this opportunity to enroll and enjoy that peace of mind that comes with being insured."

In late December, Connector staff told the board of directors that they had seen a 6 percent decrease in enrollees compared to the same time in 2019. In the presentation, the Connector said the lower membership number "is primarily the result of decreased new enrollments rather than termination of existing members, likely due to Medicaid protections associated with the federal public health emergency."

Overall retention mirrored 2019 levels at 94 percent through Dec. 22, the Connector said, but 2021 enrollments among people who were not enrolled in a plan for 2020 when open enrollment began were down about 40 percent. When open enrollment began in November, the Connector said about 56,000 people in Massachusetts had lost commercial health insurance coverage

since April.