

Ask your legislators to support fully reinstating 3-months retroactive MassHealth coverage for all MassHealth members

An Act to restore the effective date of MassHealth coverage for new applicants ([HD2440/SD1187](#)) (Rep. Cassidy, Sen. Crighton)

With 3 months retroactive coverage, low-income residents who apply for MassHealth are relieved from medical debt and safety net providers are reimbursed for care provided to uninsured patients. HD2440/SD1187 will align state Medicaid retroactive coverage with federal minimum requirements and will be supported by increased federal funding.

What is 3-months retroactive coverage?

- Retroactive coverage covers medical bills for low-income people who were eligible for MassHealth but did not apply for assistance until after they received care. There are many reasons this may happen including that:
 - People think they are still insured at the time they receive care but are not;
 - People don't know they may be eligible for MassHealth coverage;
 - The sudden or severe nature of their illness delays completing an application, or
 - People try to apply but are not successful in completing the process within 10 days of receiving care.
- Three months retroactive coverage is required by the federal Medicaid Act. Massachusetts is one of only 14 states using a waiver to limit this benefit to eligible state residents. The MassHealth waiver allows MassHealth to provide only 10 days retroactive coverage to adults 21-64 (except if they are pregnant).
- MassHealth reinstated 3-months retroactive coverage for all eligible applicants during the COVID-19 public health emergency, but this protection will be ending soon for adults 21-64 who are not pregnant.

Why should 3-months retroactive coverage be restored?

- Medical debt is a significant problem for low-income families in Massachusetts. The [2021 Massachusetts Health Insurance Survey](#) shows that 15% of families income-eligible for MassHealth reported problems paying medical bills and 38% had been contacted by collection agencies about unpaid medical bills. Medical debt can affect people's credit and reduce income to meet basic needs. Studies show people with medical debt are more likely to avoid needed care.
- Without adequate retroactive MassHealth coverage, healthcare providers must absorb financial losses reducing resources for care delivery.
- Federal dollars reimburse the state for 90% of the costs for adults 21-64 eligible under the ACA Medicaid expansion, and 50% for adults traditionally eligible like low-income parents and individuals with disabilities.

For more information contact MA Health & Hospital Association at acataldo@mhalink.org or the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute at vpulos@mlri.org