**Reinstating 3-months retroactive MassHealth coverage for all MassHealth members**

**Sept 28, 2021 Joint Health Care Finance Committee Hearing Public Hearing** Next week the HCF Committee will be hearing several MassHealth bills including bills to reinstate 3-months retroactive coverage called **“An Act to restore the effective date of MassHealth coverage for new applicants.”** [**H. 3873**](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/H3873) **and S. 737** (Lead Sponsors Rep. Carolyn C. Dykema and Sen. Joseph Boncore). **Written testimony** may be submitted to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing via E-mail to the House and Senate Chairs at **John.Lawn@mahouse.gov** and **Cindy.Friedman@masenate.gov** as well as the Committee Director at **timothy.oneill@mahouse.gov** Details [here](https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/3962).

**Why should 3 months retroactive coverage be restored?**

* Without 3 months retroactive coverage, more low-income MassHealth members are burdened by medical debt, more participating MassHealth health care providers go unpaid, and more federal dollars are left on the table.
* Retroactive coverage is required by the Medicaid Act but waived in MassHealth for people under 65. It pays medical bills for people who were eligible for Medicaid/MassHealth but did not apply for assistance until after they received care. There are many reasons this may happen: People mistakenly think they are still insured at the time they received care but are not; the sudden nature of their illness prevented completing an application, or they didn’t know about available MassHealth coverage. MassHealth allows only a 10 day retroactive window to complete an application.
* Medical debt is a significant problem for low income families in Massachusetts. The [2019 Massachusetts Health Insurance Sur](https://www.chiamass.gov/assets/docs/r/survey/mhis-2019/2019-MHIS-Report.pdf)vey shows that in 2019, 18% of families income-eligible for MassHealth reported problems paying medical bills and these rates were higher for people who were Black or Hispanic (20% and 19.6%).
* Medical debt hurts people’s credit, paying off medical debt reduces income available to meet basic needs, and people with medical debt are more likely to avoid needed care.
* In 1997, eliminating retroactive coverage for people under 65 was offset by raising income limits to 133% of poverty, eliminating an asset test, and providing coverage to some single adults under 65. But under the Affordable Care Act all these features are now part of the Medicaid expansion and reimbursed with a 90% federal match. In 2021 Massachusetts is now in company with the reddest of red states in denying 3-months retroactive coverage to people under 65 by waiving this required protection.

*In your testimony, add examples from your practice of clients/patients who benefited from the* ***temporary*** *restoration of three months retroactive coverage during the COVID public health emergency (March 2020 until further notice) or who were saddled with debt from bills incurred prior to March 2020.*