



July 20, 2021

Adam Meier, Director
Department of Public Health and Human Services
PO Box 4210
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Director Meier,

The July 2, 2021, memo by Marie Matthews, Medicaid State Director states that DPHHS has submitted two waivers to remove expenditure authority and 12-month continuous eligibility (CE) of Medicaid Expansion for adults (HELP Waiver) and all non-expansion Medicaid-covered individuals whose eligibility is based on MAGI and all Waiver Mental Health Service Plan enrollees (WASP waiver).

In House Bill 2 at the bottom of page B-5 the languages states:

"The Legislature intends that the Department of Public Health and Human Services eliminate the policy of 12-month continuous eligibility for the **Medicaid expansion population.**"

<https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2021/sesslaws/ch0573.pdf>

Clearly, the Department is carrying out a directive from HB2- the Montana budget bill. MNA is unclear why DPHHS is making policy choices based on a notation in a budget bill. The legislature provides direction in policy bills and the decision to eliminate CE appears to go against legislative intent when three policy bills were introduced in the 2021 session addressing CE and each failed.

This policy decision seems to contradict the Governor's goal to expand access to behavioral health and substance abuse treatment across the full spectrum of care considered in the HEART Act Initiative, impacting many very low-income parents on traditional Medicaid. During the session, MNA heard from our APRN members that elimination of CE will impact continuity and access of regular behavioral health treatment that they provide in their practices across Montana. Often, APRNs are the only provider offering behavioral health in rural communities.

MNA believes that continuous eligibility allows for continuity of care for the most vulnerable whether it is for Medicaid Expansion or traditional Medicaid. Since HB 2 is a budget bill rather than policy directive and three CE bills failed in the 2021 session, MNA respectfully asks that the department revisit the policy choice to eliminate CE for the entire Montana Medicaid program. MNA is submitting these comments for both the state and federal comment period.

Sincerely,

Vicky Byrd, MSN, RN, CEO
Montana Nurses Association

C: Charlie Brereton, Health Care Policy Advisor
Marie Matthews, Medicaid Director
DPHHS Legal

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