

# Office of the Commissioner of Insurance: Insurance Commissioner Afable and Health Services Secretary-Designee Palm lead effort to extend 2021 open enrollment period

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**Madison, Wis.** – Wisconsin Insurance Commissioner Mark Afable and Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) Secretary-designee Andrea Palm today joined with multiple stakeholders in calling for an extension to the upcoming 2021 HealthCare.gov open enrollment period.

Open enrollment – the annual period in which people can enroll in a health insurance plan from HealthCare.gov – is currently scheduled to begin November 1 and continue through December 15, 2020. In a letter to Alex Azar, Secretary for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Seema Verma, Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Commissioner Afable and Secretary-designee Palm, were joined by approximately 30 different health care and insurance providers, as well as consumer, government, and community organizations, in asking for the Open Enrollment period to be extended through the end of January 2021.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying economic fallout have magnified the importance of quality, affordable health coverage,” said Commissioner Afable. “The

pandemic has likely increased the need for health insurance while posing enrollment challenges, especially for those who might be new to the HealthCare.gov marketplace and need assistance in signing up. An Open Enrollment period extension would allow additional outreach and assistance to those who may have lost coverage due to the pandemic.”

The letter, a copy of which can be found [here](#), was drafted as part of Governor Tony Evers’ [Health Care Coverage Partnership](#). The partnership directed the Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Office of Commissioner of Insurance (OCI) to engage with stakeholders in order to enhance outreach efforts and educate consumers on their health insurance options.

“We know access to quality, affordable healthcare is key to living a healthy life. And that is no more true than during this COVID-19 pandemic,” said DHS Secretary-designee Andrea Palm. “Wisconsinites who need healthcare should be provided with every possible opportunity to access it, and that means we need an extended Open Enrollment period.”

As part of the Health Care Coverage Partnership, earlier this summer Gov. Evers and OCI launched [www.WisCovered.com](http://www.WisCovered.com) to connect Wisconsinites with free, expert help to get healthcare coverage. Available in English, Spanish, and Hmong, WisCovered helps put people in touch with assistance via phone from organizations like Covering Wisconsin and the United Way’s 211. These experts can help families understand their coverage options and determine if they qualify for free coverage through BadgerCare or if they qualify for financial help to lower their monthly premium with an individual plan from HealthCare.gov.