



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation

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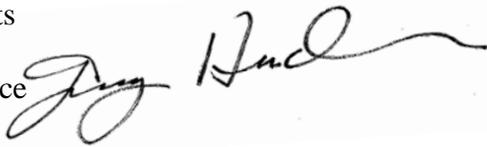
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COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE

BULLETIN 2020-30

To: All Insurance Carriers Issuing Insured Coverage in Massachusetts and Self-Insurance Groups Covering Employers in Massachusetts

From: Gary D. Anderson, Commissioner of Insurance 

Date: December 29, 2020

Re: Continued Flexibility in the Issuance and Administration of Insurance during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Public Health Crisis

The Division of Insurance (“Division”) issues this Bulletin 2020-30 to remind Insurance Carriers (“Carriers”), regardless of the line of coverage, and self-insurance groups about the Division’s prior guidance in Bulletin 2020-05 that expresses the Division’s expectations for Carriers to take steps to help address concerns about maintaining coverage and preserving the Massachusetts insurance market during the COVID-19 public health crisis. We all continue to struggle to address the societal and economic impacts of this situation, and we need Carriers to continue to search for flexibility to maintain coverage.

Background

As stated in earlier Bulletins, the public health and societal effects resulting from the spread of COVID-19 has dramatically impacted the Commonwealth. It continues to be essential that government and business leaders take all appropriate steps to safeguard the well-being of the Commonwealth’s citizens. Insurance coverage plays a critical role in the stability of the Commonwealth’s economy and the protection of its residents. COVID-19 has imposed unique risks to our insurance market. Since Governor Baker declared a state of emergency within the Commonwealth in March 2020, the Division has expected Carriers to take all reasonably necessary steps to preserve policyholder access to insurance coverage.

Continued Flexibility

During this period, the Division believes that Carriers should continue to be flexible in collecting premiums and find ways to further address what the Division believes could be long-term disruptions in the business environment. All Carriers (whether issuing property and casualty, life and annuity, or health products) are advised, in accordance with the details laid out in Bulletin 2020-05, to provide policyholders with as much flexibility to maintain their existing coverage as is reasonably possible during the period of the COVID-19 public health crisis. The Division also would not consider it appropriate for a Carrier to impose any new or additional fee in exchange for granting this flexibility. Exploring all appropriate flexibility in arrangements and timing of payments will help protect policyholders while preserving the solvency of the Massachusetts insurance market.

In addition to continuing the flexibilities outlined in Bulletin 2020-05, the Division expects Carriers to maintain customer support services to provide consumers information about their insurance options, such as exploring ways to modify coverage to reduce premiums. Anticipating that some of their policyholders will experience financial hardships related to the COVID-19 public health crisis and have difficulty meeting their premium payment obligations, Carriers should proactively provide policyholders with information about how to contact the Carrier to investigate options that may be available to prevent a loss of coverage.

The Division will continue to monitor the financial impact of the pandemic on Carriers and ensure compliance with the applicable statutory and regulatory standards related to rates and consumer protections.

If you have any questions about this Bulletin, please contact Kevin Beagan, Deputy Commissioner for the Health Care Access Bureau, at (617) 521-7323.