BECERRA EXTENDS PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY, COVID-19 WAIVERS

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra renewed the public health emergency (PHE) declaration, which was set to expire on January 16, for another 90 days -- much to the relief of providers who say the COVID-19 flexibilities that expire with the PHE are vital to helping them battle Omicron.

Providers specifically raised concerns about losing COVID-19 waivers that loosened restrictions around telehealth services, nursing home staff training, three-day hospital stays and Medicaid eligibility.

The public health emergency declaration has been in effect for nearly two years with officials extending it at least seven times since then-Secretary Alex Azar declared it in January 2020.

HHS had promised some advance notice and committed to providing 60-days notice before letting the emergency and its related regulatory flexibilities lapse.