The COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) is expected to continue through the end of 2021, Acting Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Norris Cochran wrote in a January 22 letter to governors, signaling the temporary 6.2% bump in federal Medicaid matching funds and a slew of other Medicare and Medicaid emergency waivers put in place during the pandemic will not end soon. HHS will give states 60 days’ notice before the public health emergency ends so they can plan for the end of the higher Medicaid match rates, Cochran said.

A year-long extension of the PHE would leave in place emergency use authorizations for diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines and potentially could lead to new HHS policies to help states respond to the COVID-19 emergency.