The Biden administration has selected Massachusetts Medicaid Director and MassHealth Assistant Secretary Daniel Tsai as the next CMS deputy administrator and Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services director beginning July 6, putting in charge an official whose state touts Medicaid as a path to universal health care and coverage of social determinants of health.

Tsai has served since January 2015 as Massachusetts Medicaid director and MassHealth assistant secretary. CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure credited him with successfully leading his state in 2016 through its most significant changes since the 1990s to focus on value-based care for beneficiaries.

CMS also lauded programs under Tsai that invested in nutrition and housing for high-cost, at-risk individuals as part of addressing the social determinants of health. The agency praised his state’s investments in community health centers, behavioral health and community-based services.

The National Association of Medicaid Directors cheered Tsai’s appointment as the Biden administration continues the trend of nominating state Medicaid directors. In addition to responding to the pandemic, NAMD wants to work with Tsai on advancing health equity, supporting states in addressing social determinants of health, accelerating innovative delivery system and payment reforms and leading physical and behavioral health integration.