

Federal government extends Massachusetts waiver for universal healthcare program.

In continuing coverage from previous editions of *NAHU Newswire*, the [New York Times](#) (10/1, A16, Sack) reports that on Tuesday, Massachusetts "reached agreement with federal officials on financing a three-year continuation of" its universal healthcare initiative. According to Gov. Deval Patrick (D), "the state and the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services had negotiated the extension of a waiver that enables federal financial support for the state's subsidized coverage plan." The agreement allows the state to "spend up to \$21.2 billion on the program over the next three years, an increase of \$4.3 billion over the initial three-year period." The state's original waiver was "granted when Massachusetts enacted its plan in 2006," which "allowed the state to take federal money intended to compensate hospitals for charity care and use it to subsidize coverage for low-income uninsured residents." Under the waiver, the state can "provide financial assistance to families" that earn "less than three times the federal poverty level," a rate that is significantly "higher than the eligibility cutoff allowed for most states."