



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector Authority
100 City Hall Plaza
Boston, MA 02108*

CHARLES BAKER
Governor

MARYLOU SUDDERS
Board Chair

KARYN POLITO
Lieutenant Governor

LOUIS GUTIERREZ
Executive Director

**Board of the Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector Authority
Minutes**

Thursday, April 2, 2020
10:00 AM to 11:00 AM

Live Stream

Attendees: Louis Gutierrez, Marylou Sudders, Nancy Turnbull, Lou Malzone, Michael Chernew, Mark Gaunya, Dimitry Petion, Matthew Veno, Rina Vertes, Gary Anderson, FayeRuth Fisher, Cassandra Roeder (who was sitting by designation on behalf of Secretary of Administration and Finance Michael Heffernan)

The meeting was called to order at 10:09 AM.

- I. Welcome:** Secretary Sudders thanked Board members for convening virtually for an off-schedule meeting. She stated that April would be a difficult month, a time when the Commonwealth and its hospitals would experience the coronavirus surge. She informed members of the rapid increase in testing throughout the state, reminding individuals that on February 28, there was no capacity to test in the state and now just over a month later, over 50,000 tests had been administered to date while stressing the importance of the need to continue expanding testing capacity. She commented on the impacts of social distancing to positively bend the trend of the spread of COVID-19 cases and shared with members that Partners Health Care had agreed that morning to work with the Commonwealth and the city of Boston to operate a field hospital at the Boston Convention and Expo Center. She then informed members of a statewide contact tracing initiative to further stop the spread of coronavirus. She stated that half of the state's local Boards of Health have minimal to no infrastructure to engage in contact tracing of individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 or who have been exposed to the coronavirus and inform them of the need to isolate and self-quarantine, even if they are asymptomatic. She stated that while this may be outside of the main responsibilities, the Health Connector (CCA) is drawing upon its expertise to create a statewide teleprocess of contact tracing across the Commonwealth.

Mr. Gutierrez then thanked Secretary Sudders for her leadership of the COVID-19 Command Center and wished her health and safety as she continues in her critical role guiding the Commonwealth during this unprecedented crisis.

II. Update on and Board Authorization for the Health Connector's Involvement in Emergency Efforts Relating to COVID-19 Pandemic (VOTE): Mr. Gutierrez began the presentation by informing the Board that the purpose of today's meeting is to request their authorization for CCA to undertake activities to support the state's efforts in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. He stated that the presentation would provide an overview of CCA's support for the contact tracing efforts, not a review of the approach itself. He informed the Board that the Department of Public Health (DPH) would be the lead agency, partner organization staff would be responsible for implementing protocols and CCA's role would be to support essential needs to create a large-scale contract tracing effort.

Mr. Gutierrez provided background on the coronavirus pandemic and the declaration of the state of emergency in Massachusetts. He shared that countries which have been successful in containing the outbreak have implemented a multi-pronged approach to reduce the spread of the virus. This includes social distancing, widespread testing of symptomatic individuals, and appropriate quarantining of individuals who are confirmed to have COVID-19 and people who have been in contact with confirmed cases. CCA has been asked to support the contact tracing effort by establishing key infrastructure. CCA will, upon authorization from the Board, assist with contracting for the call center, additional contract tracing personnel, and general project management. He noted that CCA will work to integrate vendors' Customer Relations Management (CRM) system with DPH MAVEN case tracking system. He stated that the Command Center is working closely to arrange for funding of activities but that CCA may need to pay directly for some contract services during the initial standup period. With respect to the funding, Secretary Sudders added that final funding will eventually come from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief Economic Security (CARES) Act but CCA will jumpstart the funding and federal dollars will make their way back to CCA when allocated from the CARES Act. In response to a question from Mr. Gaunya regarding the funding, both Secretary Sudders and Mr. Gutierrez confirmed that this is essentially a timing issue with respect to funding. Ms. Turnbull stated that she is in awe of the Secretary's leadership of the Command Center, and her exceptionally hard work and the extraordinary responsibility that she has taken on. Mr. Gutierrez continued to note that establishing the contact tracing capacity is of utmost urgency and is consistent with CCA's vital role to maintain the Commonwealth's entire health care system.

Mr. Gutierrez reviewed action to date between CCA and the Commonwealth regarding the initiative, and informed the Board that CCA's General Counsel has determined that in accordance with statute the Board may authorize this collaboration to move forward as necessary for the maintenance of the Massachusetts health care system. He stated that CCA has started to lay some of the groundwork for the contract to establish the call center. He stated that the effort is proceeding at a rapid pace, one that is hour to hour rather than day to day, noting that the situation is fluid as each day brings greater awareness of the supports needed. He informed the Board that CCA will continue to be updated on core activities and that the contact tracing support activities will be tracked in a separate budget from routine Exchange activities.

He then informed the Board of the request with respect to refinement of the by-laws in order to maximize CCA's responsiveness during the current emergency. The refinement will authorize contracts to move forward upon confirmation of need by the Board chair and approval from the Secretary of Administration and Finance with respect to budget. Mr. Gutierrez reviewed the current by-laws and Board notification requirements alongside the proposed adjustments. He then provided the Board with an outline of anticipated contracts CCA expects to execute as well as interagency service agreements (ISA) between CCA and other state agencies. He reassured the Board that CCA does not anticipate that CCA taking on this role will have any impact on Health Connector members. He informed the Board of the extension of the COVID-19 Special Enrollment Period (SEP), the efforts to delay termination of members due to delinquency and reiterated that CCA staff remains committed to working on core Exchange and public service efforts unrelated to the contact tracing initiative.

Dr. Chernew commented that he echoes all of the comments and gratitude to Secretary Sudders. He continued to note how incredibly important all of this is for public health and economic reasons and wants to make sure that the approval before the Board is flexible enough to evolve as different needs emerge. He stressed the importance of testing and contact tracing for people in high contact situations. Secretary Sudders confirmed the importance of the efforts noted by Dr. Chernew and elaborated on how testing efforts continue to grow, including growth of mobile testing, testing in nursing homes, and testing for health care responders, whether or not they are symptomatic. In response to Dr. Chernew's comments regarding the flexibility of the Board vote, Secretary Sudders noted that she has encountered areas of government that are nimble and others that are not.

In response to a question from Mr. Gaunya regarding rapid testing and recent developments by the state in response to the pandemic, Secretary Sudders shared that she has been making critical decisions on equipment and opportunities available to increase the state's fight against the spread of the virus and complete data isn't always available to help make those decisions.

Without further additional questions, Secretary Sudders called for the Board vote and proceeded with a roll call vote that resulted in unanimous approval.

The Secretary thanked the Board members for their support and the Board then voted to adjourn at 10:38AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin E. Ryan