

June 30, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express our strong support for the bipartisan *Medicaid Reentry Act (S.285)* and urge the Committee to consider the legislation, which would allow Medicaid to cover health services thirty days before an individual is released from prison or jail.

The Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy (MIEP) prohibits the use of federal funds and services for medical care provided to inmates of public institutions, which negatively impacts rehabilitation outcomes and puts a financial strain on local budgets. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, more than half of those in the criminal justice system suffer from a mental health condition and of those with serious mental health condition, approximately 75 percent also have a co-occurring substance use disorder. Additionally, individuals reentering society after incarceration are 129 times more likely than the general population to die of a drug overdose during the first two weeks post-release.

Allowing incarcerated individuals to receive services covered by Medicaid 30-days prior to their release from jail or prison will expand access to vital mental health and addiction services, thereby decreasing recidivism and improving health outcomes for individuals reentering the community. Furthermore, by investing in prevention, the *Medicaid Reentry Act* will provide savings on healthcare and criminal justice costs for jurisdictions across the country.

The *Medicaid Reentry Act* will also help keep everyone in the community healthy, especially as we continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Continuous health coverage is vital for people to stay healthy and be able to access the care they need, when they need it. Incarcerated individuals are at particular risk of contracting COVID-19.[1] Making sure these individuals have uninterrupted health coverage, particularly during the transition period when they are reentering their communities, is essential for keeping them healthy, limiting spread of the virus, and protecting the health of the community overall.

Passage of this vital legislation would take a necessary and important step toward improving health outcomes for incarcerated individuals, reducing recidivism, and restoring the federal, state, and local partnership in delivering safety-net benefits. The *Medicaid Reentry Act* has broad bipartisan and bicameral support, facing only procedural hurdles in its path to passage.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to addressing the mental health and justice-related needs of local communities. Our organizations stand ready to answer any questions and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

[1] Hawks L, Woolhandler S, McCormick D. COVID-19 in Prisons and Jails in the United States. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2020;180(8):1041–1042. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2020.1856

A New PATH
ACOJA Consulting LLC
ACT UP Philadelphia
Addiction Policy Forum
Addiction Professionals of North Carolina
Advocates, Inc.
AIDS United
AIM Angels In Motion
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence
American Association on Health and Disability
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Jail Association
American Medical Student Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
AMERSA, Inc.
Angels In Motion (AIM)
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
ASSOCIATION FOR AMBULATORY BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Behavioral Health Association of Providers
Black and Latinx Community Control
CADA of Northwest Louisiana
California Consortium of Addiction Programs & Professionals
Casa de Salud
Center For Community Alternatives
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Employment Opportunities
Center for Health Justice Inc.
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Popular Democracy
Central City Concern (Portland Metro Area, Oregon)
Chicago Drug Users' Union
Child Welfare League of America
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
College & Community Fellowship
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)
Community Catalyst
Community Medical Services
Community Oriented Correctional Health Services
Correctional Association of New York
Correctional Leaders Association

CURE (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants)
Drexel University Health Equity Advancement Lab
EAC Network
Elevyst
Equal Justice Under Law
Exodus Transitional Community
Faces & Voices of Recovery
Families USA
Forward Justice Maryland
Friends of Safehouse
From Prison Cells to PhD
Futures Without Violence
Greenburger Center for Social and Criminal Justice
Health in Justice Action Lab
Hearts on a Wire
HIV Medicine Association
Hour Children
Inseparable
Interfaith Action for Human Rights
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium
International Community Corrections Association
John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY
Justice for Families
Justice Innovations
Lakeshore Foundation
Leadership for Justice Innovations, LLC
Legal Action Center
Legal Action Center (LAC)
Live4Lali
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Major Cities Chiefs Association
Major County Sheriffs of America
Mental Health Association in New York State
Mothers On the Inside
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
NACBHDD and NARMH
National Alliance for Medication Assisted Recovery
National Association For Behavioral Healthcare
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers
National Association of Counties
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Commission on Correctional Health Care

National Council of Churches
National Criminal Justice Association
National Federation of Families
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National HIRE Network
National Juvenile Justice Network
National Safety Council
National Sheriffs' Association
National Urban League
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
New Hour for Women & Children II
No Health without Mental Health (NHMH)
Operation in My Back Yard
Operation Restoration
Operation Save Our City
Osborne Association
P.A.I.N. (Prescription Addiction Intervention Now)
Partnership to End Addiction
Philadelphia Overdose Prevention Network
Philadelphia Participatory Research Collective
Prison Policy Initiative
Reproductive Justice Inside
Safer Foundation
Shatterproof
Silent Cry Inc
SMART Recovery
Southern Tier AIDS Program/Southern Tier Care Coordination
Stop Stigma Now
TASC (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities)
Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc.
The American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine
The Council of State Governments Justice Center
The Fortune Society
The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention
The Kennedy Forum
Trauma Informed
Treatment Advocacy Center
Treatment Communities of America
Trust for America's Health
Well Being Trust
WestCare Foundation
Workers Revolutionary Collective

cc:

Senator Tammy Baldwin
Senator Mike Braun
Senator Sherrod Brown
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
Representative Brian Fitzpatrick
Representative Alcee Hastings
Representative David McKinley
Representative Paul Tonko
Representative David Trone
Representative Mike Turner
Representative Lauren Underwood