

Medicaid Reentry Act

Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Mike Braun (R-IN), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Sherrod Brown (D-OH)

The interrelated COVID-19 and substance use disorder (SUD) crises have significantly impacted incarcerated individuals and those who are newly reentering the community.

Over half of people in state prisons and two thirds of individuals in jails have SUD, compared to 8.5 percent of the general population. Upon release, these individuals are uniquely vulnerable to overdose due to a reduced physiological tolerance for opioids, lack of effective addiction treatment options while incarcerated, and poor care transitions back into the community. In fact, individuals reentering society after incarceration are **129 times more likely to die of a drug overdose** in the first two weeks post-release than the general population.

This issue has been compounded by the pandemic, as correctional settings and surrounding communities have become major COVID-19 hotspots nationwide. The need for uninterrupted and comprehensive coverage has never been more critical, and the inability of Medicaid to cover otherwise eligible individuals prior to release has unintentionally stood in the way.

Problem: Currently, federal statute prohibits any form of federal health coverage for incarcerated individuals except under very limited circumstances. In most states, Medicaid coverage is immediately terminated when someone is sent to a correctional setting. This creates a serious coverage gap when individuals are released, as they often have no access to health care or addiction treatment during a stressful and dangerous time.

Solution: The *Medicaid Reentry Act* would give states the ability to restart Medicaid coverage for eligible incarcerated individuals up to 30 days prior to their release from a jail or prison.

The Medicaid Reentry Act:

- Grant new flexibility to restart benefits for Medicaid-eligible incarcerated individuals 30 days pre-release;
- Make it easier for states to provide effective addiction treatment and services, allowing for a warm handoff to community care and a reduced risk of overdose deaths post-release; and
- Ensures a smooth transition back to Medicaid for those who are already eligible for Medicaid coverage.

A Broad Coalition Supports the Medicaid Reentry Act:

American Society of Addiction Medicine, National Council for Behavioral Health, Treatment Advocacy Center, National Association of Counties, Major County Sheriffs Association, National Sheriffs Association, Treatment Communities of America, National Health Care for the Homeless Council, National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health, A New PATH, Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice, American Psychiatric Association, The Kennedy Forum, Young People in Recovery, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Clinical Social Work Association, HIV Medicine Association, Mental Health America, New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services, Shatterproof, American Psychological Association, Student Coalition on Addiction, National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists, College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists, Central City Concern