

Medicaid Reentry Act Passes As Part of The House's Build Back Better Act

On Thursday, November 18, 2021, the House of Representatives passed the Build Back Better Act (BBB). A key provision in the Act could vastly improve on the health and safety of all communities. The BBB contained language taken from the bipartisan Medicaid Reentry Act, which would allow for Medicaid services thirty days before release from a jail or prison.

Under current law, Medicaid services cannot be provided to individuals who are incarcerated regardless of whether they are otherwise eligible for Medicaid benefits. This statutory limitation has historically resulted in discontinuous health coverage, which leads to poor health outcomes and frustrates attempts to create health systems that serve Medicaid beneficiaries regardless of where they receive care. As a result, many people living with unmet mental health needs and untreated substance use disorders find themselves cycling in and out of carceral settings that exacerbate their unmet health needs.

Part four of Subtitle F of the BBB remedies this challenge by making an exception to the provision that inmates in non-medical institutions are not eligible for Medicaid services. This regulation would go into effect two years after BBB is enacted. The provision in BBB states that inmates are eligible for Medicaid services thirty days prior to their release.

COCHS has provided critical policy support for stakeholders that are advocating for this essential legislation. We are grateful for the partnership of the National Association of Counties, NAMI, Community Catalyst, the National Sheriffs' Association, Major County Sheriffs of America, the American Medical Association, and the broad network of partners that have supported this legislation. We will continue to monitor the Act's process and look forward to supporting our partners in maximizing the exciting possibilities that this legislation will create.

Letters in support of the Medicaid Reentry Act have been sent to congressional leaders from the **American Medical Association** and a **consortium of stakeholder organizations**.

