



LEVY COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COMMISSIONERS
Government Serving Citizens

John Meeks, Vice Chair
Rock Meeks, Chair
Lilly Rooks
Matt Brooks

October 18, 2022

The Honorable Jennifer Bradley, Florida Senate
324 Senate Office Bldg.
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: Eliminate the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy

Honorable Senator Jennifer Bradley,

On behalf of the Levy County Board of County Commissioners, I respectfully request your urgent support for the inclusion of legislation that amends the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy (MIEP) in a bipartisan behavioral health legislative package that is being considered at the end of the year. This harmful federal policy, outlined under Section 1905(a)(A) of the Social Security Act, makes no distinction between individuals housed in jails versus prison, and thus unfairly denies or revokes federal health benefits for adults and juveniles that are being housed in local jails prior to conviction. These individuals, who are pending disposition, are still presumed innocent under the United States Constitution.

The MIEP causes disruption in primary and behavioral health care access for justice-involved populations that are enrolled in federal programs such as Medicaid, Medicare or the Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP). Not only does this discontinuity in care contribute to detrimental health outcomes for both individuals and their communities, but it also increases rates of jail recidivism. By contrast, uninterrupted health care helps those who enter the criminal justice system break the cycle of recidivism exacerbated by untreated physical and mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

In Levy County, there is an average of 100-110 pre-trial detainees housed in our jail on any given day, our average population is around 150 inmates, and about 70% of our inmates exhibit behavioral health disorders. This isn't exclusive to Levy County, our nation's jails provide critical care to individuals with mental illness, who – without adequate community resources and continuous health care coverage – rely on the jail as de facto behavioral health hospitals and treatment facilities.

As Congress on behalf of Levy County, we urge you to support the inclusion of the following bills that would address MIEP:

- ***The Medicaid Reentry Act (H.R. 955/S.285)***, which would allow Medicaid payment for medical services furnished to an incarcerated individual during the 30-day period preceding the individual's release.
- ***The Due Process Continuity of Care Act (S.2697/ H.R. 6636)***, which would allow pretrial detainees to receive Medicaid benefits at the option of the state.

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- ***The Equity in Pretrial Health Coverage Act (S.3050)***, which would remove limitations under Medicaid, Medicare, CHIP and the Department of Veterans Affairs on benefits for persons in custody pending disposition of charges.

As we continue our work as County Governments and local behavioral health providers to ensure better access to and the continuity of care in our communities, we recognize that these local efforts will be far more effective when carried out in partnership with State and Federal counterparts.

Thank you for your continued service to the people of Levy County, we hope to have your support in fostering better behavioral health outcomes through your support of this important, bipartisan policy change.

Sincerely,

Russell Meeks Jr., Chairman
Levy County Board of County Commissioners

Cc: U.S. Senator Marco Rubio, U.S. Senator Rick Scott, Representative Joe Harding



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