

December 18, 2014

The Hon. Rick Snyder, Governor
State of Michigan
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Snyder:

We write to respectfully recommend that you sign SB 1011, which went through the Legislature December 17.

This bill would enhance Medicaid eligibility status for incarcerated individuals. If they enter incarceration already in Medicaid, or are found to otherwise meet eligibility criteria while incarcerated, their Medicaid status would be considered suspended (since Medicaid doesn't reimburse on-site health care for inmates), but would not be terminated. State departments would also be required under the legislation to conduct annual Medicaid redeterminations required by the federal government, in order to assure that suspended Medicaid eligibility would not be lost for want of such redetermination.

For several years, the federal government has recommended that Medicaid eligibility of otherwise qualifying inmates be suspended instead of terminated. That is because doing so is a win-win situation for everyone involved.

Suspension rather than termination means an inmate can go offsite for a hospitalization with Medicaid reimbursing for that service. It also means an inmate upon release can immediately have Medicaid status turned on for payment of community services. Doing so not only has little or no short-term cost to the state, it actually has positive long-term fiscal implications for state and local government. The released individual would not have to wait an extended period of time for a Medicaid determination, during which state or county government would have to pay 100% of health care costs or forego services in lieu of such costs, leaving the individual's health to deteriorate. State costs for an immediate resumption of Medicaid would be non-existent (given Medicaid expansion) or very limited (given traditional Medicaid status).

We believe SB 1011 fits plans you have made regarding better use of expanded Medicaid vis-à-vis persons experiencing incarceration. The bill also is consistent with planning statements of the Mental Health Diversion Council.

We commend the Departments of Community Health, Human Services and Corrections for being more proactive in this area over recent years. We also commend a new executive branch policy that says the Medicaid status of an incarcerated individual may

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be suspended. But that policy is only permissive. As such, it does not carry the commitment and significance needed, and too many cases will continue to fall through the cracks. We need to go beyond permissiveness to a required policy. SB 1011 does that.

Signing SB 1011 helps vulnerable individuals get needed health care services more quickly, with the federal government paying most of the freight for that. Michigan needs this bill to become law.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

Mark Reinstein, Ph.D.
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Mental Health Assn. in Mich.
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Farmington Hills, MI 48334

On behalf of the following endorsers:

The ARC Michigan
Assn. for Children's Mental Health
Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan
Mich. Assn. for Children with Emotional Disorders
Mich. Assn. of Community Mental Health Boards
Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency
Michigan Disability Rights Coalition
Michigan Partners In Crisis
Mich. Protection & Advocacy Service
Michigan Psychiatric Society
National Alliance on Mental Illness, Michigan
National Assn. of Social Workers, Michigan
United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan