



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
One Ashburton Place, Room 2133
Boston, Massachusetts 02108



Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association
44 School Street, Suite 300
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

November 29, 2023

Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Ms. Brooks-LaSure,

On behalf of the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association (MSA) and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), we write to express our strong support for Massachusetts' Amended 1115 Demonstration, entitled "MassHealth Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP) 1115 Demonstration." The Demonstration, if approved, will advance health equity by expanding MassHealth coverage for incarcerated individuals' health related social needs as they prepare to reenter the community.

In partnership, the MSA, EOPSS, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, MassHealth and other strategic partners in the state have come together to propose this innovative and sustainable 1115 MIEP Demonstration. The MSA and EOPSS have a strong collaborative history with MassHealth, working closely on initiatives such as pre-release services and the statewide Behavioral Health Supports for Justice Involved Individuals (BH-JI). This latest collaborative effort, in the form of the MIEP 1115 Demonstration, will address the increasingly complex needs of the incarcerated population, including substance use disorders, mental health conditions, and physical health issues.

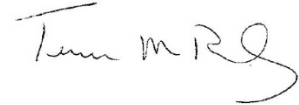
The goal of the proposal is to reduce recidivism and improve overall health outcomes for incarcerated individuals upon release. This will benefit incarcerated individuals with uncertain release dates, contributing to health and racial inequity. The initiative facilitates continuity of care by connecting correctional and community health care providers which, in turn, establishes trust before release. The anticipated outcomes of the 1115 MIEP Demonstration also include enhanced public safety, a reduction in overdose deaths, and improved health and racial equity. If approved, the 1115 MIEP Demonstration removes a significant barrier to equity in the Social Security Act (SSA) – namely, the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy (MIEP). The MIEP prohibits incarcerated individuals, regardless of their status, from receiving federal health care benefits provided under the SSA. But for the fact that they are incarcerated, these women, men and youthful offenders would be eligible for federal assistance. This prohibition places an undue strain on our law enforcement, public safety, public health, our communities at large and most importantly, the individuals themselves.

Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, approximately 11 million individuals were admitted yearly into our nation's correctional facilities with a daily population hovering around 740,000. The U.S. Department of Justice found that the local jail population has a higher prevalence of chronic health conditions than the general population. In fact, our nation's jails have become the largest de facto behavioral health treatment facilities for those impacted by substance use and mental health disorders. It is estimated that over 75% of our incarcerated individuals here in the Commonwealth have a substance use, mental health and/or cooccurring disorder. We are experiencing a crisis that together we must address to prevent gaps in health care and to improve health outcomes for those returning to our communities.

Expanding health coverage for eligible incarcerated individuals can and will change lives. We recognize the work that will be needed to implement this initiative over the next several years, but we are eager to continue our collaboration, so that our communities can be healthier and safer. In fact, we have been working in collaboration on the MIEP 1115 Demonstration, and now the Amended Request, for over three and 1/2 years.

Thank you for your commitment to eliminating health disparities and inequities for all incarcerated individuals.- We stand united and in full support of the MassHealth Section 1115 Amended Demonstration Request and we ask for your support and approval.

Sincerely,



Terrence M. Reidy
Secretary of Public Safety
Executive Office of Public Safety

Sincerely,



Nicholas Cocchi, Sheriff
Hampden County
President, Massachusetts Sheriffs'
Association