

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Introduces bipartisan reentry act to help reduce drug overdoses

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ASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Mike Braun (R-IN) introduced bipartisan legislation that expands access to health care, including mental health services and substance use disorder treatment, for Medicaid-eligible individuals 30 days before their release from jail or prison. *The Reentry Act*, which was [endorsed by the New York Times editorial board](#), follows alarming evidence that shows individuals reentering society from incarceration are [129 times likelier](#) than the general population to die of a drug overdose during the first two weeks after release.

“When people serve their time and are working to transition back into the community, it is our responsibility to give them the tools they need to live healthy, successful lives, and that includes health care coverage to help reduce the risk of overdose,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “The opioid and substance use epidemic impacts every community across the country, but particularly incarcerated individuals who are working to reenter society. I’m proud to work with Democrats, Republicans, law enforcement, and the public health community on this reform to fight against this deadly epidemic and help those reentering our communities do so safely. ”

“In their first two weeks after release from incarceration, ex-convicts are 129 times more likely than the general public to die from a drug overdose. *The Reentry Act* seeks to tackle the epidemics of opioid overdoses and recidivism after release from prison by resuming benefits for Medicaid-eligible individuals 30 days before they are released to avoid a gap in coverage,” **said Senator Mike Braun.**

Currently, federal law does not allow any form of federal health coverage for incarcerated individuals except under very limited circumstances. This creates a serious coverage gap when individuals are released, as they often have no access to health care or treatment during a stressful and dangerous time.

The legislation is also sponsored by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and House companion legislation was introduced by Representatives Paul Tonko (D-NY-20), John Rutherford (R-FL-05), David Trone (D-MD-06), and Michael Turner (R-OH-10).

“This 2023 Reentry legislation will allow for Medicaid to cover the last thirty days of medical assistance for incarcerated individuals,” **said Dave Mahoney, Retired Dane County Sheriff and Past President of the National Sheriff’s Association (2020-2021)**. “The importance of this legislation is the continuum of care for those with varied medical needs. In the long run, it is critical in reducing recidivism and in doing so, eases budgets and increases public safety—a win for every community!”

“Helping some of our most vulnerable neighbors overcome the grip of addiction shouldn’t be a partisan issue. The life & death consequences of the opioid epidemic don’t discriminate between political party, age, gender, geography, or any other classifications. I’m glad Senator Baldwin is once again leading a bipartisan effort to tackle both the issues of recidivism and addiction,” **said Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley**. “We know that many individuals enter our justice system due to unaddressed behavioral and mental health needs. Studies show a person reentering society is more likely to die of a drug overdose than members of the general population. Without the tools our fellow neighbors need to seek care upon release, the odds are for more likely that they will recidivate or experience an overdose event when re-entering the community. The Re-Entry Act is necessary to help ensure uninterrupted and comprehensive coverage is available to the most vulnerable residents.”

The Reentry Act:

- Restarts benefits for Medicaid-eligible incarcerated individuals 30 days pre-release
- Makes it easier for states to provide effective substance use disorder treatment and services, allowing for smoother transitions to community care and a reduced risk of overdose deaths post-release
- Does not change WHO is eligible for Medicaid or CHIP coverage, just ensures a

warm handoff back for those already eligible.

The legislation is supported by A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing), Academic Consortium on Criminal Justice and Health, Addiction Professionals of North Carolina, Advocacy and Research on Reproductive Wellness of Incarcerated People at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, AIDS United, American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work, American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists (AAPP), American Counseling Association, American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine, American Society of Addiction Medicine, AMJ Training & Education, Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare, Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness, Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs, Boston Medical Center Health System, CADA of Northwest Louisiana, California Consortium of Addiction Programs & Professionals, Center for Behavioral Wellness, Clinical Social Work Association, Community Catalyst, Community Oriented Correctional Health Services, Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, Down Home NC, Drug Policy Alliance, Fox Valley Perinatology, Fruit of Labor Action Research & Technical Assistance, LLC, Futures Without Violence, Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice, Hearts on a Wire, HIV Alliance, Horizons, Kin Health & Wellness, SPC, Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration, NASTAD, National Alliance for Medication Assisted Recovery, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Association for Behavioral Healthcare, National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, National Coalition of STD Directors, National Commission on Correctional Health Care, National Health Care for the Homeless Council, National Juvenile Justice Network, North Carolina Formerly Incarcerated Transition Program, On The Bright Side, LLC , Oregon Health and Science University, Scappoose Clinic, Overdose Crisis Response Fund, Overdose Prevention Initiative at the Global Health Advocacy Incubator, Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative, Prison Policy Initiative, Reframe Health and Justice, Rights & Democracy, Shatterproof: Stronger Than Addiction, Stop Stigma Now, The AIDS Institute, The Kennedy Forum, The Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc., and Ventura County Medical Center.

A one-pager on the legislation is available [here](#) and the full text is available [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).