

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1314

October 7, 2016

Felicia F. Norwood, Director
Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services
201 South Grand Avenue East
Springfield, IL 62763

Dear Director Norwood,

I write to express my support and commend you and the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services on developing a thorough, innovative, compassionate, cost-saving 1115 waiver proposal to improve the Medicaid program in the state of Illinois and behavioral health services for state residents. This is no small undertaking, and I appreciate your hard work and dedication to taking advantage of this critically-important, but often neglected, tool by which states can reclaim their authority and offer Americans something better than a one-size-fits-all approach to their health care.

It has been a longstanding issue in the state of Illinois that a substantial number of behavioral health patients are housed in the Medicaid program, which more often than not serves them poorly, fails to promptly reimburse providers, and does not offer them a path forward without additional emergencies and inpatient stays. This challenge is made more complex by overlapping health issues, particularly chronic conditions that make treating the behavioral health population more resource-intensive. Additionally, insufficient treatment or lack of treatment altogether, both common, leads to more rigorous, more expensive care in the long run.

I was particularly struck by your attentiveness and commitment to the population of individuals in Illinois suffering from drug addiction. Opioid and heroin abuse are a devastating problem in the 14th Congressional District and across the state, and I stand alongside you in your efforts to combat this heartbreaking problem.

This summer I held several meetings in Kane County to solicit the advice of members of our communities who are affected by opioid abuse and whose lifework is to overcome addiction – patient advocates, treatment centers, law enforcement, and state and local government officials. They offered me insight on the root of addiction and the deep seeds of this problem young people are facing in Illinois, and together we identified ways we can do things better.

I want to thank you for highlighting the importance of community-based care in your waiver proposal. What I have heard time and time again from my constituents is that while detox and inpatient treatment centers are a vital piece of the recovery puzzle, we're missing a key part of the

transition *into* recovery. These men and women need sober homes and community living environments where their addiction treatment is not discounted or over. I believe your inclusion of supportive housing services in this waiver proposal is a strong and valuable step toward a culture of whole-person treatment that respects these patients' recovery for what it is – an ongoing journey where the work doesn't stop after inpatient treatment.

Thank you again for taking the time to undergo this worthwhile endeavor. It is my belief that states are the best place to test new and innovative approaches to health care delivery. We know Illinois better than the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services does, and the 1115 waiver gives us a unique opportunity to take care of the people we serve through smart, local innovation.

I look forward to working with you as you move forward in the waiver application process. I will support you in any way I can as we take the first step toward transforming Illinois' behavioral health system.

Sincerely,



Randy Hultgren
Member of Congress