



August 19, 2015

Ms. Dorothy Teeter, Director
Washington State Health Care Authority
P.O. Box 42710
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Ms. Teeter:

On behalf of Catholic Community Services and Catholic Housing Services of Western Washington, I am writing to express our strong support for the Supportive Housing Medicaid benefit proposed in the Healthier Washington Initiative's 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver application to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Supportive housing is a nationally recognized evidence-based best practice for serving people who are chronically homeless and have serious behavioral and/or physical health disabilities. People who are chronically homeless experience significant health disparities, including high rates of chronic and acute behavioral and physical illnesses, risk of injury, trauma, exposure from living outside, and barriers to accessing uninterrupted, appropriate levels of health care. As a result, this population also has high costs to public systems, including health care, due to frequent emergency department utilization, hospitalizations, and high utilization of other public crisis services.

A strong body of local and national evidence has demonstrated that supportive housing is effective in helping people who are chronically homeless access and retain permanent housing with regular appropriate levels of health services. This intervention leads to housing stability, positive health outcomes, and improved utilization of health and social services. These proven outcomes result in significant savings to public systems that often exceed the cost of providing supportive housing. An evaluation of the Downtown Emergency Service Center's 1811 Eastlake Project, a supportive housing program in King County, found that over \$4 million in savings to public systems was achieved within the first year of the program. Of this total, 56% of the savings was in Medicaid cost reductions¹.

One of the barriers to bringing supportive housing fully to scale in Washington is a shortage of funding for the housing services that are critical to the model's success. If approved, the Supportive Housing Medicaid benefit will bring additional resources for supportive housing services to Washington, reduce homelessness, and will help make the expansion of this intervention financially feasible.

Thank you for proposing a Supportive Housing Medicaid benefit in Washington's 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver application. If implemented, this proposal will create significant health care savings while ensuring people with serious disabilities are able to live with security, autonomy and dignity in their own communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Reichert", is written over a horizontal line.

Michael Reichert
President

¹ *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2009; 301(13):1349-1357. Doi:10.1001/jama.2009.414.