



August 21st, 2015

Dorothy Teeter, Director
Washington State Health Care Authority
PO Box 42710
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Ms. Teeter:

On behalf of the Committee to End Homelessness in King County (CEH), I am writing to express our support for the Supportive Housing Medicaid benefit proposed in Healthier Washington Initiative's 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver application to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

People who are chronically homeless or at-risk of chronic homelessness experience significant health disparities, including high rates of chronic and acute behavioral and physical illnesses, risk of injury, trauma, and exposure from living outside, and barriers to accessing consistent, appropriate levels of health care. As a result, this population has high costs to public systems, including health care, due to frequent emergency department utilization, hospitalizations, and high utilization of other public crisis services.

One of the barriers to bringing supportive housing fully to scale in Washington is a shortage of funding for the services that are critical to responding to the needs of those experiencing chronic homelessness. If approved, the Supportive Housing Medicaid benefit will bring additional resources for supportive housing services to Washington State and will help make the expansion of this intervention financially feasible.

CEH recently adopted a new strategic plan to guide our efforts to address and eliminate homelessness in King County. Our vision is that homelessness is rare in King County, racial disparities are eliminated, and if one becomes homeless, it is brief and only a one-time occurrence. One of the major principles guiding this plan is the need to prioritize those whose health and safety are most vulnerable. This benefit will help our community address the needs of this population and ensure there are services matched with housing resources that will support long-term stability.

CEH is encouraged by the State's efforts to pursue 1115 waiver authority to inform healthcare transformation to meet the needs of the most vulnerable Washington residents and would like to offer the following suggestions for addressing gaps in the proposed application:

- Strengthen the waiver’s population focus with a clear investment in population health and prevention strategies to ensure a more balanced portfolio approach.
- Include opportunities to create supports for those with substance use disorders.
- Ensure a comprehensive approach to securing housing and employment by including clinical and community health services, and
- Establish a flexible and informed approach to prioritizing high-risk homeless adults for supportive housing.

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 black ink, appearing to read "Mark Putnam", is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mark Putnam, Director

Committee to End Homelessness in King County