

November 29, 2022

Dear Leaders of the House of Representatives:

We are writing today to strongly urge you to bring up and swiftly pass H.R. 8166/S.3846, the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Reauthorization Act of 2022 on suspension when the House of Representatives returns for the lame-duck session. This bipartisan legislation makes critical improvements to the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHCP), which supports jurisdictions creating collaborative responses to people with mental illnesses or co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders in the criminal justice system. We applaud the work of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which unanimously approved the bill in May. The Senate has already shown their strong support for the bill by passing it by unanimous consent in June. Now it is time for the House to show their support for state and local governments that are working on this complex issue by bringing the bill to the floor.

Since its inception, JMHCP has supported initiatives across the country to reduce contact with the criminal justice system and increase access to treatment and supports for people with behavioral health needs. JMHCP was created by the Bureau of Justice Assistance in 2006 as a critical way to support the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA), which was signed into law in 2004 by then-President George W. Bush. JMHCP's mission, then and now, has been to unify justice and health partners around a common goal: reducing criminal justice involvement for people with mental illness.

Collectively, state and local governments use JMHCP grants for a broad range of activities, including establishing diversion programs, creating or expanding community-based treatment programs, supporting the development of curricula for police academies and orientations, and providing in-jail treatment and transitional services, and training programs to teach criminal justice, law enforcement, corrections, mental health, and substance use personnel how to identify and appropriately respond to incidents involving veterans. Additionally, grant funds may be used to train law enforcement on identifying and improving their responses to people experiencing a mental health crisis. The program was reauthorized in 2008 and again in 2016 with bipartisan support.

The Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Reauthorization Act of 2022 will:

- Strengthen support for mental health courts and crisis intervention teams (CITs);
- Support diversion programming and training for state and local prosecutors;
- Strengthen support for co-responder teams;
- Support the integration of 988 into the existing public safety system;
- Amend allowable uses for grant funds to include suicide prevention in jails and information-sharing between mental health systems and jails/prisons;
- Amend allowable uses to include case management services and supports; and
- Clarify that crisis intervention teams can be placed in 911 call centers.

The law enforcement, training and treatment components of JMHCP will help law enforcement better handle calls involving people with mental health and substance use

challenges. Jurisdictions across the country are implementing strategies to improve the outcomes of these encounters, which includes providing specialized training and tools that can yield a response that prioritizes treatment over incarceration, when appropriate. CITs, along with other practices authorized under the legislation, have been proven to be effective in reducing recidivism, enhancing public safety, and freeing up criminal justice resources for traditional crime fighting purposes.

With the responsibility of treating people with mental illness often falling on an already strained criminal justice system, it is imperative that we provide resources to help law enforcement officers, judges, corrections officers, and mental health professionals develop more thoughtful and cost-effective programs. We strongly urge the House to support law enforcement and our communities better serve individuals with mental health disorders and to increase public safety by passing the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Reauthorization Act in the lame-duck session.

Sincerely,

National Fraternal Order of Police

National Sheriffs Association (NSA)

Major County Sheriffs of America

Conference of Chief Justices

Conference of State Court Administrators

Wounded Warrior Project

Addiction Policy Forum

National Association of Counties

National League of Cities

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

National District Attorneys Association

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Police Organizations

American Jail Association

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors

The Council of State Governments Justice Center

Major Cities Chiefs Association

American Probation and Parole Association

Faith & Freedom Coalition

TASC (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities)

Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

Leslie County Sheriff's Office

Elliot County Sheriff's Office

Union County Sheriff's Office

Grayson County Sheriff's Office

Knox County Sheriff's Office