SUPPORT LOCAL EFFORTS TO REDUCE MENTAL ILLNESS IN JAILS BY FULLY FUNDING THE JUSTICE AND MENTAL HEALTH COLLABORATION PROGRAM IN ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS

QUICK FACTS

- Currently, there are over two million people incarcerated in U.S. prisons or jails, and each year, over 11 million people are booked into jails across the nation.
- It is estimated that 64 percent of people booked in local jails display a pattern of symptoms that are indicative of mental health conditions.
- JMHCP has been authorized at $50 million since its creation, but has typically received less than $10 million in annual appropriations.

ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your members of Congress to support local efforts to reduce the number of individuals with mental health, substance abuse or co-occurring disorders in county jails by providing full funding for the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHCP) in the annual appropriations process. JMHCP was recently reauthorized for FYs 2017-2021 through the 21st Century Cures Act (P.L. 114-255) at $50 million per year, and should be funded at this level annually to maximize the impact of local efforts to address the prevalence of mental illness in the criminal justice system.

BACKGROUND:

Enacted by Congress in 2004, the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHCP) is a grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). The grants, which are available to state, tribal and local governments, can be used to develop and implement programs designed to improve outcomes for individuals with mental health conditions who are involved in the criminal justice system.

Collectively, state and local governments use these grants for a broad range of activities, including establishing jail diversion programs, mental health courts, creating or expanding community-based treatment programs, and providing in-jail treatment and transitional services. In addition, grant funds may be used to enhance training for criminal justice and mental health system personnel on how to appropriately respond to crises involving individuals with mental health disorders.

Although Congress has authorized JMHCP at $50 million since its inception, appropriators have never fully funded the grant program. Currently, JMHCP is funded at $10 million in the FY 2016 appropriations package (P.L. 114-113), which remains in effect through April 28, 2017 under a Continuing Resolution approved in December 2016. This level of funding, although far less than the program’s authorized level, actually represents the highest level of funding for MIOTCRA since FY 2010.

JMHCP was reauthorized for FYs 2017-2021 through the 21st Century Cures Act (P.L. 114-255) in December 2016. In addition to extending the existing $50 million annual authorization of the program, the legislation expanded the scope of the program so that grants may be used for additional purposes related to addressing substance abuse, mental health, or co-occurring disorders in the criminal justice system. Among these purposes is “sequential intercept mapping,” which aims to assess how individuals with mental illness flow through the criminal justice system and how they can be diverted from the system at different junctures. The improvements made to JMHCP in the Cures Act will be most effective with full funding in annual appropriations.
KEY TALKING POINTS

• An estimated 2,000,000 individuals with serious mental conditions are booked into county jails each year, resulting in prevalence rates of serious mental conditions in jails that are 3 to 6 times higher than in the general population. An even greater number of individuals who are detained in jails each year have mental health problems that do not rise to the level of a serious mental condition but may still require a resource-intensive response. Extending health benefit coverage to those in pre-trial custody improves public safety.

• The Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHCP) is a grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) that provides federal funding to assist state, local and tribal governments in their efforts to improve outcomes for individuals with mental health conditions who are involved in the criminal justice system. JMHCP has been authorized at $50 million since its inception.

• Despite its $50 million authorization level, JMHCP has typically not been fully funded in the annual appropriations process. Currently, the program is receiving just $10 million per year through the FY 2016 appropriations package (P.L. 114-113), which remains in effect through April 28, 2017 under a Continuing Resolution. JMHCP should be fully funded at $50 million per year in upcoming appropriations bills.

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