

# **Housing Alignment and Coordination of Critical and Effective Supportive Health Services Act**

## **"Housing ACCESS Act"**

### **Markey**

***Background: Supportive Housing is the solution to unnecessary institutionalization and chronic homelessness.***

Supportive housing is the evidence-based approach to helping people with extremely low incomes who have disabilities and complex behavioral and physical health conditions maintain housing stability and thrive in their communities. It prevents and ends expensive nursing home stays and chronic homelessness and provides stability for people with disabilities exiting the justice system.

Supportive housing requires “three legs of a stool”-- capital to build buildings, rental subsidies to keep rents affordable, and services to help tenants remain stably housed.

Each of these three legs is administered by a different federal agency, and there is little holding them together.

- Capital financing is administered by Treasury.
- Rental subsidies are overseen by Housing and Urban Development.
- Housing-related services are authorized by Health and Human Services.

### **Complex and Overlapping Regulations for Housing and Services Stall the Creation of Supportive Housing**

Federal programs that fund housing and services are complex and challenging to coordinate and state agencies administering housing and services often don't know how to align them. For example, Medicaid agencies aren't versed in low-income housing tax credits; likewise, public housing agencies aren't versed in Medicaid. As a result, individuals with Medicaid housing supports don't have access to housing, and people in need of housing support services are at risk of losing their housing.

### **Supportive Housing Service Providers Face a Gap that Prohibits Them From Transitioning to a Medicaid Model**

CMS's recognition of housing-related services and supports as a foundational aspect of healthcare is a recent development, which opens the door for service providers skilled in delivering supportive housing services to seek Medicaid reimbursement and serve far more people. Unfortunately, most are unable to bridge the financial gap required to transition their internal administrative functions to a Medicaid model, and little data exists on the appropriate reimbursement rates needed to improve staff recruitment and retention to deliver services at standards that meet the evidence base.

## ***The Housing ACCESS Act Aligns Federal Housing and Healthcare Resources to Create Supportive Housing***

The Housing ACCESS Act aligns housing and services resources and addresses the barriers providers face when seeking Medicaid reimbursement for housing-related services and supports.

### **Alignment of Housing & Services**

Requires the Departments of HHS, HUD, and Treasury to issue joint guidance to State Medicaid agencies, public housing agencies, Continuums of Care, and housing finance agencies to:

- Align eligibility criteria and eligibility determination processes.
- Measure common outcomes, disaggregated by race.
- Clarify available federal funding that can be made available to address IT and staffing needs related to seeking Medicaid reimbursement.

### **Critical Guidance**

Under the Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), in consultation with the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Secretary of Treasury, will issue guidance to connect individuals to Medicaid housing-related services and supports and housing resources in an integrated manner.

The guidance will also encourage supportive housing service providers to seek Medicaid reimbursement and will clarify for states which existing authorities allow for the use of Federal funds to help providers build information technology (IT) systems and establish adequate staffing levels to seek Medicaid reimbursement.

### **National Rate Study**

Requires a national study to determine rates that allow providers to pay living wages, reduce staff turnover, and ensure evidence-based case ratios.

### **Rate Study**

To ensure effective service delivery, the Act requires a national study of reimbursement rates for providers of housing-related services and supports and services provided by certified community behavioral health clinics and Federally qualified health centers that promote integrated care for people with complex conditions.

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