



**MENTAL HEALTH
COLORADO**

March 15, 2017

SB17-21

Concerning Reentry Services for Persons With Mental Illness in the Criminal Justice System, And, In Connection Therewith, Making an Appropriation

Sen. Martinez Humenik

Rep. Singer

Position: Strongly Support

- Supportive community services to persons with a mental illness who are being released from the department of corrections or jails are sorely lacking.
- Without community supports, such as housing, employment assistance, and mental health treatment most individuals recidivate back into the criminal justice system.
- Prisons and Jails are not therapeutic environments for treating individuals who have a mental illness, yet, due to a lack of housing alternatives and other community services, individuals with a mental illness are found there, as “housing” of a last resort.
- Without making changes, such as outlined in SB 21, Colorado will continue to pay millions of dollars for mental health treatments in the prison system with no future reduction in costs.

Data:

- 1) \$93,000,000 of taxpayer money is spent in the Colorado Prison and Jails system on mental health care for inmates.¹
- 2) Homelessness costs Colorado taxpayers:
 - \$666/day or \$243,090 /year for a bed at Colorado's state psychiatric hospitals;
 - \$56/day or \$20,000/ is spent per inmate in Colorado correctional facilities;
 - \$175/day or \$63,800/year is spent by public agencies on detox, jails, and emergency rooms for the chronically homeless living on the street.²

HUD estimates a cost of \$17,000 per person per year to be housed in permanent supportive housing.³

Investing now saves the state budget down the road. While the fiscal constraints the legislature faces are real, making SB 12, SB 19 and SB 21 a fiscal priority can turn around the ever increasing costs to the taxpayers of continuing to spend money that does not address the problem.

¹ Tri West 2011 Status of Mental Health Care in Colorado

² Department of Local Affairs