

Justice Roundtable COVID-19 Reentry Recommendations

April 30, 2020

1. **Congress should pass H.R. 6414 and fund it at the requested level of \$1 billion** to incentivize states and localities to release individuals from incarceration and **to support safe transition and reentry to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic**. This funding would support a range of critical reentry services, such as access to housing/shelter, food/nutrition, medical and behavioral health care (including overdose prevention and harm reduction services), workforce development, etc.
2. **Congress should provide funding to ensure that individuals released from custody have access to safe, affordable, and accessible housing including:**
 - a. **Tenant-based rental assistance vouchers specifically for individuals released from custody** as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - b. **\$11.5 billion in McKinney-Vento Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG)** to ensure that formerly incarcerated people can access shelter and housing during the epidemic through short-term rental assistance, rapid rehousing, and housing counseling.
3. **Congress should pass H.R. 1329 to permit states to start Medicaid benefits for eligible individuals 30 days prior to release from custody** to provide more effective COVID-19 care, including appropriate medical supplies, treatment, coordination, and transition to community-based care.
4. **Congress should repeal or waive current federal prohibitions and oppose additional or new prohibitions that prevent individuals with criminal records from receiving federal COVID-19 benefits and supports**. Federal programs, including SNAP, TANF, housing assistance, and SBA Paycheck Protection and EIDL programs refuse or reduce access to benefits for individuals with certain records. In addition, some states institute onerous work-requirements to receive benefits. Congress should prevent such bars to federal benefits and resources during the COVID-19 epidemic.
5. **Congress should ensure access to COVID-19 federal cash assistance and unemployment assistance to individuals or their families (in case of youth) impacted by the justice system**. These funds are intended to help with lost wages, access to food, housing, and other basic needs. Relief funds should not be automatically seized or reduced to pay owed child support or other debts.
6. **Congress should improve employment outcomes by expanding existing federal education and workforce development programs that serve individuals with criminal records, including:**
 - a. **\$650 million through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program**, including:
 - i. **\$350 million** for reentry and workforce development services through the Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) program
 - ii. **\$200 million** for Title 1 Employment and Training Activities to support workforce training providers serving individuals impacted by the criminal justice system
 - iii. **\$100 million** for correctional education through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program
 - b. **\$44 billion for a national transitional jobs program** funded through the Dislocated Worker Assistance National Reserve with a dedicated percentage of these jobs for youth and adults impacted by the justice system. Subsidized employment and “earn-as-you-learn” models are time-limited, wage-paying jobs that combine real work, skills development, and supportive services that help participants transition successfully into the labor market.