



For Immediate Release

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New Report Reveals that Striking Down Obamacare Will Not Only Deny Health Care to Millions but Will Fuel Mass Incarceration

New York, NY—As the Supreme Court takes up *California V. Texas*, a case that may strike down the Affordable Care Act and deny health care to millions of vulnerable families, the Square One Project of Columbia University released a new report, "[Understanding Health Reform as Justice Reform: Medicaid, Care Coordination, and Community Supervision](#)," which reveals how justice and safety hinge on access to health care. The report reveals how parole and probation do not effectively serve people with chronic health conditions, and that expanding and building upon Medicaid in all 50 states, rather than taking it away, will improve the health of people exiting prison and jail and actually help end mass incarceration.

"Health and justice are so closely intertwined that we cannot effectively reduce mass incarceration without ensuring access to health care," said **Lynda Zeller, a Square One Project Executive Session member and primary author of the report**. "Individuals with chronic health conditions will continue to be over-represented in the justice system, suffer high rates of re-incarceration, and remain incarcerated for longer periods of time if they do not have access to adequate health care. This report offers policymakers a playbook on how to better serve these individuals and our communities while saving money by harnessing the power of existing investments in health care and reducing mass incarceration."

The report comes as the Supreme Court is set to rule yet again on the future of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Millions of Americans, many of whom have recently left jail and prison, get their health care through Medicaid; currently, 38 states and the District of Columbia expanded Medicaid or passed ballot measures to do so. If the ACA is struck down, so will the Medicaid expansion, and formerly incarcerated individuals will be left uninsured and unable to get the care they need.

An estimated 80 percent of people released from incarceration in the United States have a substance use disorder, mental health illness, or physical health condition. Failing to address their health needs can often lead to higher rates of recidivism, and complicates their ability to find successful employment opportunities and reintegrate into society.

Colorado, Texas, and North Carolina have used grant money to expand mental health care and substance abuse treatment for offenders. These states [also saw large drops in recidivism](#).

- North Carolina had a 42% reduction in people sent back to prison after probation violations between 2006 and 2015.
- Texas had a 25% reduction in the 3-year reincarceration rate between 2004 and 2013.
- Colorado saw probation revocations and the 3-year reincarceration rate reduced by at least 23% in around the same time frame.

The examples above are from grant funded efforts. Building these reforms on state Medicaid programs can yield even greater success.

“Criminal justice reform is often centered around sentencing, policing and other incremental tweaks but the true path to justice and to safety means making our social safety net robust and strong,” said **Katharine Huffman, Executive Director of the Square One Project**. “If we ensure everyone has access to quality physical and mental health care, including people recently released from incarceration, we’ll have stronger, safer and healthier neighborhoods.”

[“Understanding Health Reform as Justice Reform: Medicaid, Care Coordination, and Community Supervision”](#) is co-authored by Lynda Zeller, Senior Fellow of Behavioral Health at Michigan Health Endowment Fund, and Jackie Prokop, Director of Program Policy at Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. The report is released through Square One’s Executive Session on the Future of Justice Policy, which seeks to generate and cultivate new ideas around the work to reimagine justice. Read the full report [HERE](#).

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About the Square One Project

The Square One Project aims to incubate new thinking on our response to crime, promote more effective strategies, and contribute to a new narrative of justice in America. Learn more about the Square One Project at squareonejustice.org.