

BILL NUMBER:

SPONSOR:

TITLE OF BILL:

Community Safety and Health Systems Realignment Act

PURPOSE:

To realign federal public safety functions toward a public health, family stability, and community well-being framework by transferring specified functions of the Department of Justice to the Department of Health and Human Services, and for other purposes.

BILL LANGUAGE

A BILL

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SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Community Safety and Health Systems Realignment Act.”

SECTION 2. CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

1. Many issues currently addressed through the criminal legal system are fundamentally public health and social service challenges;
2. The Department of Justice primarily functions as a law enforcement and prosecutorial agency, while the Department of Health and Human Services possesses expertise in public and behavioral health, child, family, and other community-based services, and social supports for prevention, intervention, and treatment;
3. Transferring certain civil, programmatic, and oversight responsibilities will improve outcomes, decrease incarceration, and promote equity.
4. The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world, with incarceration disproportionately impacting children, families, Tribal Nations, and communities of color.
5. Parental incarceration is an adverse childhood experience associated with long-term negative health, educational, and economic outcomes.
6. The criminalization of mental illness, substance use disorders, poverty, and trauma has failed to improve public safety and has exacerbated community harm.

7. Evidence demonstrates that community-based prevention, diversion, treatment, and family-centered interventions reduce recidivism and improve public safety outcomes at lower cost.
8. Federal justice-related grantmaking has increasingly funded health-adjacent, prevention-oriented, and family-based interventions that align more closely with public health systems than punitive enforcement structures.
9. Tribal Nations are sovereign governments with inherent authority to design justice, wellness, and healing systems consistent with their cultures and laws.
10. A coordinated federal approach centered in health and human services is necessary to modernize public safety policy, strengthen families, and promote community well-being.

SECTION 3. TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.

(a) Transferred Agencies and Offices. Not with standing any other provisions of law, the following entities are transferred from the Department of Justice to the Department of Health and Human Services:

1. The Office of Justice Programs (OJP);
2. The Bureau of Justice Assistance;
3. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention;
4. The Office for Victims of Crime;
5. The SMART Office and all reentry-related authorities;
6. Any DOJ grantmaking authority primarily related to prevention, diversion, treatment, rehabilitation, reentry, or victim services.

(b) Juvenile Justice.

1. Juvenile justice policy shall be administered as a child development within HHS.
2. Programs shall prioritize:
 - a. Keeping children in the community;
 - b. Reducing system involvement for youth;
 - c. Addressing trauma, education, housing, and health needs.

(c) Children of Incarcerated Parents.

1. Supporting children of incarcerated parents.
2. Addressing trauma, education, housing, and health needs;

(d) Victims and Survivors of Crime.

Victim services shall be administered as long-term recovery and stabilization services, including mental health care, housing support, and economic security, consistent with public health frameworks.

(e) Tribal Sovereignty and Self-Governance.

1. Participation by Tribal governments shall be voluntary.
2. Funding may be awarded directly to Tribal governments and Tribal organizations.
3. No Tribal government shall be required to adopt state or federal law enforcement models as a condition of funding.
4. ACSW shall engage in meaningful Tribal consultation.

SECTION 4. PERSONNEL AND ASSETS.

All personnel, funds, records, grants, and property associated with the transferred functions shall be transferred to HHS without loss of pay, status, or benefits.

SECTION 6. CONTINUITY OF PROGRAMS

All grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts shall continue without interruption.

SECTION 7. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLBEING.

(a) Establishment. There is established within the Department of Health and Human Services an agency to be known as the Administration for Community Safety and Wellbeing (ACSW).

(b) Purpose. The Administration shall serve as the principal federal entity responsible for prevention, diversion, rehabilitation, victim services, reentry, and family-centered public safety strategies.

(c) Functions. ACSW shall—

1. Administer federal grant programs transferred under this Act;
2. Coordinate with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Administration for Children and Families, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and Health Resources and Services Administration;
3. Support states, localities, and Tribal governments in implementing community-based interventions, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive community safety strategies;
4. Promote alternatives to incarceration, including family-based and community-based models;
5. Support children and families impacted by incarceration.

SECTION 8. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESTRUCTURING.

(a) The Department of Justice shall retain authority over:

1. Federal prosecution;
2. Civil rights enforcement;
3. Constitutional litigation;
4. Legal counsel to the federal government.

(b) The Department of Justice may not administer social service, prevention, or rehabilitation grant programs.

(c) Nothing in this Act shall impair ongoing investigations or litigation.

SECTION 9. EVALUATION AND REPORTING.

(a) GAO shall conduct a review within 3 years of enactment.

(b) HHS shall report annually on public safety, health, and family stability outcomes.

SECTION 10. RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

The Secretary of Health and Human Services may promulgate regulations necessary to carry out this Act.

SECTION 11. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect 180 days and then allow 12-24 months for full transfer (with shorter timelines for more immediate actions).