



# Senator Wants Medicaid to Pay for Inmates' Mental Health Care

By [ALEX AUBUCHON \(/PEOPLE/ALEX-AUBUCHON\)](#) • FEB 22, 2017

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An Alabama senator says the federal government should cover most of the cost of caring for county jail inmates with mental illnesses.

Sen. Cam Ward, a Republican from Alabaster, says counties currently pay for the entirety of detainees' psychiatric health care. He has introduced a bill that would shift 70 percent of those costs to the federal government under the Medicaid system.

The legislation would also allow county inmates to resume federal mental health care benefits immediately after release.





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Right now, Medicaid coverage is terminated when a person enters a county jail. Ward says this creates a gap in coverage when inmates are discharged, causing those with mental illnesses to potentially go weeks, or even months, without medication.

The bill will move to the Senate Judiciary Committee for a vote.

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