

March 14, 2017
Sent to The Tribune

To the editor:

As shown in the recent Sacramento Bee editorial re-published in the Tribune, the Republican “repeal and replace” health care plan will have a severe impact on mental health services. We want to highlight the impacts in our County.

One in every five adults in America experience a mental illness. At a moment when our society has begun to demonstrate greater understanding of the prevalence of mental illness and the need to treat it as part of a whole wellness picture, the Republican health plan threatens to undo every bit of that progress.

Among the provisions of the Affordable Care Act was the enlightened expansion of mental health benefits to everyone in our community. Private plans were required to provide mental health care in “parity” with medical care. And under the Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California) expansion, 55,000 Medi-Cal beneficiaries in our County can now get mental health care for mild to moderate conditions. We know from the our Behavioral Health Integration Project that over 2,000 County residents receive these much needed mental health services every year.

The Republican plan puts both of these advances at risk. It will severely curtail the Medicaid expansion which has extended benefits to over 16,000 SLO residents by capping federal funding and reducing it over time. The plan will also eliminate the requirement that Medi-Cal provide the “essential health benefits” that include mental health care.

We need to preserve mental health benefits for everyone. It is essential for all our well-being.

Sincerely,

Jill Bolster-White, Executive Director, Transitions Mental Health Association
Joel Diringer, consultant to Transitions Mental Health Association