



National Association for Rural Mental Health

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The American Health Care Act: Fewer Covered, Weaker Protections, Higher Costs

We join hands in solidarity with all major national medical associations, with all persons who have any type of disability, and all persons who are older in strongly opposing the American Health Care Act released earlier this week by House Republicans.

This bill does not fulfill President Trump's stated goals that repeal and reform of the Affordable Care Act will protect persons with prior health conditions and will expand the number of people insured. In fact, it would lead to fewer covered, weaker protections and higher costs for all Americans.

We specifically oppose the elimination of the Medicaid Expansion and the transformation of the Medicaid Program into a per capita block grant. These actions will leave millions of Americans with serious mental health and substance use conditions without life-sustaining and essential health insurance coverage, especially at a time when the Nation is suffering from the largest Opioid Epidemic in its history.

We also specifically oppose the proposed reductions in premium subsidies and care subsidies for those insured through the state Health Insurance marketplaces. The reduced tax credits will cause many of these persons to drop their life-sustaining health insurance because they simply will no longer be able to afford it. Experts have asserted that such changes will cause a "death spiral" in the individual insurance market, as well as adverse effects on employer provided insurance.

The Congressional Budget Office has preliminarily estimated that 10 million Americans could lose their health insurance coverage as a result of these untoward changes.

Ron Manderscheid, Executive Director of NACBHDD and NARMH said, "It would be quite inhumane to suddenly cause all these Americans to lose their health insurance coverage. We particularly are concerned about the 3 million persons with serious behavioral health conditions who would likely lose their coverage. Such precipitous actions also would have dire financial consequences for insurance companies providing health insurance."

“We want to challenge Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to fulfill his word. The Senator has said that the Senate will replace the ACA with something that is better. We would applaud broader health insurance coverage with better benefits and lower costs, and better access to good care.”

“Both NACBHDD and NARMH look forward to working with the Senate and House to fulfill Senator McConnell’s pledge.”

NACBHDD represents county mental health, substance use, and developmental disability directors across the United States. These county directors are responsible for the behavioral health care of three quarters of all Americans. NARMH represents rural behavioral health practitioners, program directors, and researchers who seek to improve the behavioral health of persons and families living in rural areas.

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