



The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force is the voice of the community on issues related to the quality and responsiveness of mental health and substance abuse disorder services.

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American Health Care Act Threatens Access to Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services

The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force has grave concerns about the impact of the American Health Care Act approved today by the US House of Representatives. Children and adults with behavioral health needs rely on Medicaid or private insurance for essential therapies, prescription drugs, home and community based services, inpatient care, and other treatment services, and provisions in the AHCA may put them at risk.

The impact of the \$839 billion dollar cut to Medicaid will be especially significant as so many people with mental illness and substance abuse disorders rely on Medicaid for treatment and supportive services. “The cuts to Medicaid are unprecedented and put at risk the 1.2 million Wisconsinites who rely on Medicaid for access to health care, including mental health and substance abuse services, said Mary Neubauer, Co-chair of the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force.

The AHCA would allow states to roll back protections for people with pre-existing conditions, such as a mental health diagnosis, including making essential benefits optional. “Without the ACA protections, people with a mental illness or substance abuse disorder could be denied coverage, charged unaffordable prices for insurance, and have lifetime limits for insurance coverage, “ said Mental Health Task Force Co-chair, Kelly Davis, PhD. If essential benefits are not required, insurance plans will not be required to cover vital services such as prescription drugs, hospitalization, outpatient services, mental health services, substance abuse disorder treatment, and much more.

Passage of the AHCA without the benefit of analysis from the Congressional Budget Office is fiscally irresponsible. The previous CBO score indicated that an earlier version of the bill would cause 24 million people to lose health care coverage. The health and lives of our community members who rely on these services and may lose access to health care is at great risk.

The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force asks the US Senate to reject the American Health Care Act, and to work with stakeholders to sustain Medicaid and maintain protections in insurance for those with pre-existing conditions, including coverage for Essential Health Benefits.

The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force was formed in 2004, in response to a crisis in inpatient psychiatric services that exposed major gaps in Milwaukee's system of mental health care. It includes over 40 organizations, and hundreds of individuals, who work collaboratively to identify issues faced by people affected by mental illness, facilitate improvements in services, give consumers and families a strong voice, reduce stigma, and implement recovery principles.