

MHA Statement on Passage of American Health Care Act

By: Paul Gionfriddo, MHA president and CEO

“At Mental Health America, we are deeply disappointed in the result of today’s vote on the American Health Care Act (AHCA). Today, the sunny, flamboyant promises of better health care at a lower cost during a political campaign gave way to the cold, dark realities of politics in America.

“Today was a tragic day for all those dealing with or caring for someone with serious mental health concerns – a day that a majority of the members of Congress stopped listening to them, and suspended the bipartisanship that has characterized so much of the gains that have been made during the past year.

“The passage of the AHCA, as it was amended today, is an astonishing assault on the health care of all Americans. While a CBO score wasn’t even done before this vote, previous estimates reported that 24 million people will lose their public or private insurance. Others will either experience steep increases in the cost of insurance, or significant reductions in the essential health services their insurance covers.

“No one will actually get better health care coverage at a lower cost.

“These effects will be felt mostly by people with chronic conditions, just as drivers who have accidents and homeowners with storm damage experience increases in their insurance premiums. They will affect people with cancer and heart disease. They will affect millions with serious mental illnesses. This is not something we can ignore or forget as we move forward. Lives are in the balance.

“The Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, has flaws that need to be fixed. Too many low-income people were left out; too many others above the subsidy limits had to pay too-high premiums for the coverage they needed.

“But this new “TrumpsCare” proposal will make things much, much worse.

“Throughout the nation, people will find that coverage has been gutted. Premiums will rise, especially for elders. Out-of-pocket costs will also go up. Medicaid cuts will shift burden to all states. People will die. These realities – and more – have drawn opposition from the vast majority of Americans, both left and right.

“And in states that now have permission to opt out of key provisions of the Affordable Care Act, our citizens will be divided into two classes: a ruling class that has been exempted from these cuts; and a regular class, who will lose essential benefits and protections on which they have come to rely.

“We call on the members of the Senate to vote this proposal down, and the entirety of Congress to start over.

“At MHA, we thank all those who fought in the open - loudly and clearly - to implore members of Congress to oppose legislation that would do great harm to people with behavioral health conditions. In the weeks and months to come, we will continue to advocate on behalf of people with behavioral health concerns.

“We will work to protect funding for mental health for children and adults; for prevention and early intervention services, for integration, for peer-to-peer services, and for all services leading to recovery; for protection of the essential mental health benefits people need; for parity protections; and for choices in care, services, and supports for people with mental health concerns.”