



In light of the recent discussion about the bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, the members of the Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ) division of the American Counseling Association (ACA) offer this statement to share our concerns.

We support efforts to strengthen and stabilize our nation's health care system and extend insurance coverage and protections. We oppose the legislation as introduced in light of the adverse impact it will have on Americans, particularly those with mental health and substance use disorders. An estimated 11 million Americans with incomes below 138 percent of the federal poverty level currently have coverage for mental health and substance use disorders, provided at parity with coverage for general medical services through Medicaid expansion plans. This bill would reduce mental health and substance use coverage for millions of Americans enrolled in Medicaid and contribute to the loss of coverage for millions more individuals (Cohn & Young, 2016).

The current bill, called the American Health Care Act, would remove the requirement for Medicaid benchmark plans to cover essential health benefits, including mental health, substance use and behavioral health services. Severe work-reducing disabilities result from these diagnoses and treatment empowers them to work. Removing this requirement would cause the loss of coverage to millions of Americans for these life-saving treatments and challenge our nation's health and economic strength (Vecchio, 2017).

The bill prohibits funding for reproductive health services under Medicaid. This limitation would cut off access to care for many low-income women and sexual and gender minorities leaving a large portion of our population without reproductive health coverage.

CSJ engage in open dialogue and advocacy to promote equity, fairness, and inclusion in public policy and in our communities. ACA advocacy competencies advise action with and on behalf of clients, students, and communities at both micro and macro levels. CSJ suggest the following action ideas.

Micro level interventions (with clients and students) include teaching self-advocacy skills, confronting barriers, connecting clients to advocacy groups, and developing alliances with other social justice organizations. Macro level interventions (with communities and social/political systems) include creating a vision for change, disseminating information via social media, providing psychoeducation, and learning about this bill and lobbying against it.

For more information, follow this link:

<https://www.counseling.org/news/updates/2017/03/24/aca-urges-members-to-rally-against-american-health-care-act>

CSJ – Advocacy Statement - Healthcare Act (04.01.17)