



**Association for Behavioral
Health and Wellness**

*Advancing benefits and services
in mental health, substance use
and behavior change.*

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Graham-Cassidy Health Care Bill is Unacceptable

Washington, DC (September 22, 2017) – The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW), the national voice for payers that manage behavioral health insurance benefits for over 175 million people, today released the following statement in response to the Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson (GCHJ) health care proposal:

“We have serious concerns about the impact this legislation’s changes would have on individuals with mental health and substance use disorders (MH/SUD). This proposal cuts health care funding for states by \$4 trillion – including funding for mental health care, care for children with disabilities, and nursing home care – our nation’s most vulnerable. It is estimated that 32 million could lose coverage in the next decade - 15 million next year alone.

“Behavioral health is an integral part of whole health and appropriate treatment for these illnesses not only leads to recovery but also aids in the improvement of a person’s physical health. Approximately 1.8 million of the 21 million people covered under provisions of the Affordable Care Act in January 2017 were receiving mental health services and subsidies; approximately 1.25 million people with serious mental disorders and about 2.8 million Americans with a substance use disorder would lose some or all of their coverage if the ACA is fully repealed. Repealing MH/SUD provisions of the ACA would take away at least \$5.5 billion in one year from the treatment of low income people with MH/SUD.

“We are concerned with the GCHJ plan to reconfigure the Medicaid program. Medicaid accounts for 21 percent of all spending on substance abuse, and 29 percent of people in the Medicaid expansion have either a mental illness or substance use disorder. The Medicaid expansion program has provided coverage to persons with MH/SUD who might not have otherwise had access to care, and it led to significant increases in coverage and treatment access for that population. ABHW supports ensuring access to medically necessary, evidence based behavioral health treatment for the Medicaid population going forward.”

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[ABHW](http://www.abhw.org) is an association of the nation’s leading behavioral health and wellness companies. These companies provide an array of services related to mental health, substance use disorders, employee assistance, disease management, and other health and wellness programs to over 175 million people in both the public and private sectors. ABHW and its member companies use their behavioral health expertise to improve health care outcomes for individuals and families across the health care spectrum. Member companies - Aetna Behavioral Health, Anthem, Beacon Health Options, Centene Corporation, Cigna, Humana Behavioral Health, New Directions Behavioral Health, Optum, and PerformCare.