

The Mental Health Coalition of the Greater La Crosse Area was established in 2004. Since then, we have advocated on behalf of those living with mental illness. This is a non-partisan effort in seeking to reduce stigma, provide educational resources, and advocate for access to quality healthcare. Our outreach is to any and all who are interested: Republicans, Democrats, independents, medical practitioners, educators, and the general community at large.

Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), our nation has made gradual progress in achieving mental health parity—that is, offering benefits that are no lower than such dollar limits offered for medical and surgical procedures. Recently, as a result, those receiving coverage and treatment have increased. Still, here in the Coulee region and in many other areas of our country, people suffer because they must confront severe shortages of psychiatrists, other mental health professionals and lack of available facilities designated for the treatment of mental illness and addiction.

Today, we are at another crossroads as Congress continues to debate ACA replacement legislation. Our coalition will continue to be a voice for people with mental illness. We advocate for equal and equitable treatment options. We ask you to support this effort because mental illness is non-partisan issue. In any given year, one in five adults in America will experience mental illness which is an “equal opportunity” occurrence affecting individuals from all races, income levels, age groups, political parties, and occupations

Whatever the outcome of the current continuing debate over the ACA, we ask that treatment for mental illness that our friends, family, neighbors and co-workers experience, be accorded the highest priority. We must not lose ground in the fight for parity and the devastating effects that would result from lost coverage.

In closing, consider the importance of this issue through the lens of these facts: According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the suicide rate today is the highest it has been in 30 years; Fifty percent of serious mental illness begins at age 14 and 75 percent by age 24; More than half of adults and children with mental illness do not receive treatment.

Our country should show it values the lives of 60 million Americans with mental health conditions by providing the resources and treatments that will not only improve the lives of these individuals and families, but reflect that as a nation, we are caring and compassionate about the welfare of all of our citizens.