



BETTY T. YEE
California State Controller

August 19, 2022

SUBJECT: Kaiser Permanente Mental Health Clinicians Strike

Mental health care is one of the most important issues of our time. From the pandemic to gun violence to economic uncertainty, California families face historic challenges. Our state is taking action. We have made significant investments in mental health programs. We have enacted some of the nation's strongest patient rights laws. However, health plans and insurers must step up too.

For years, we have seen troubling reports citing many Californians cannot get mental health treatment when they need it. In recent days, 2,000 mental health clinicians went on strike at Kaiser Permanente. These psychologists, therapists, and social workers state they have been unable to treat their patients with the frequency those patients need and are entitled to under the law. They say clinicians have been quitting Kaiser Permanente in record numbers because too few providers are being asked to care for too many patients.

This must change now.

Kaiser Permanente enrollees, just like every other Californian who has insurance, are entitled to receive medically necessary mental health services every 10 days, unless their therapist says a longer wait will not be harmful. Timely care is essential for preventing mental illness from growing in severity. It is critical for protecting the well-being of individual patients, our communities, and our state.

There is no excuse for any health plan to break the law. The clinicians on strike at Kaiser Permanente are standing up for their patients. I join others in calling on Kaiser Permanente to resolve this strike and to match the state's commitment and investment in timely, accessible mental health care. State regulators, CalPERS, and other public officials must recommit to vigorously enforcing all laws protecting patient rights.

We cannot wait. We must act now. The stakes are too high.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Betty T. Yee".

BETTY T. YEE