



ELENI KOUNALAKIS
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

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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've made huge investments in mental health programs, and we've passed some of the nation's strongest patient rights laws. But we can't do it alone — health plans and insurers need to step up.

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

This has to change — now.

Kaiser 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 that a longer wait won't be harmful. Timely care is essential for preventing mental illness from growing in severity. It is critical for protecting the wellbeing of individual patients, our communities, and our state.

There is no excuse for any health plan to break the law. We applaud the striking clinicians at Kaiser for standing up for their patients. We call on Kaiser Permanente to resolve this strike and to match the state's commitment to investing in timely, accessible mental health care. And we call on state regulators, CalPERS, and other public officials to vigorously enforce all laws protecting patient rights.

This cannot wait. The stakes are too high.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Eleni".

Ambassador Eleni Kounalakis (RET.)
Lieutenant Governor