

Resolution 19-05.90

Resolution Of The California Democratic Party In Support Of Full Parity For Mental Health Patients And Clinicians At Kaiser Permanente

WHEREAS mental illness is among the most common health problems faced by Californians, with nearly 1 in 6 California adults experiencing a mental illness of some kind and more than half of Californians believing that most people suffering with mental health conditions do not get the help they need; and

WHEREAS Kaiser Permanente (Kaiser), California's largest health insurer and provider of healthcare services with more than 8.8 million covered lives statewide, was fined \$4 million by the California Department of Managed Health Care in 2013 for violations of California's Mental Health Parity Act and standards for timely access to care, was cited for ongoing violations in two follow-up investigations, and is currently under a state-ordered monitoring program scheduled to continue until 2020; and

WHEREAS despite repeated claims to the contrary, Kaiser has barely increased its ratio of 1 full-time mental health clinician to every 3,000 plan members, and understaffing remains so severe that more than 60,000 California Kaiser patients annually are being referred to outside therapists who often cannot adequately coordinate their care with other Kaiser health professionals, thereby denying patients the integration of health care services that Kaiser promises; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the California Democratic Party strongly supports the establishment of full parity for mental health patients and clinicians at Kaiser Permanente boosting clinician staffing to levels sufficient to ensure timely access to appropriate care, with caseloads of no more than one new intake visit for every five return appointments, patient wait times of no more than ten business days for return appointments unless directed by the treating clinician, and third-party resolution of disputes regarding staffing standards; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED; Kaiser Permanente strictly limit and ultimately phase out the outsourcing of mental health services so as to ensure that Kaiser's mental health patients receive the full benefits of reliable, accountable, integrated mental and physical health care across the full spectrum of their treatment; and provide Kaiser's mental health clinicians with the same raises and benefits enjoyed by all other members of Kaiser's unionized workforce throughout the State of California, as required to address staff shortages and recruit and retain a stable and experienced workforce.