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Behavioral Health Action Launches Statewide Coalition, Calls on Candidates to Prioritize Behavioral Health Solutions in 2018 General Election Campaign

Post Primary Election statewide poll of likely voters reveals that nearly 9 in 10 Californians want candidates to prioritize behavioral health issues

SACRAMENTO – As California’s General Election campaign takes shape, a statewide coalition of non-traditional partners, called Behavioral Health Action, has launched a statewide effort to engage candidates and highlight the importance of addressing behavioral health issues including mental illness, drug and alcohol disorders, depression, anxiety, personality disorders or other addictive behaviors. The Coalition released findings from a survey of 800 likely November General Election voters that revealed 92 percent of likely voters believe it is important for California to address behavioral health, compared to other issues facing the state.

“We are united behind a powerful cause. Behavioral health matters because it affects all of us. Young, old, rich, poor. White, Latino, African-American, Asian,” said California Hospital Association President and CEO Carmela Coyle. “If you’re diagnosed with cancer, you’re often surrounded by teams ready to help. But with a behavioral health diagnosis, we often fall into nothingness, without the resources and help and support that’s needed. That has to change.”

The statewide Behavioral Health Action coalition joins non-traditional partners including individuals and families working with education, labor, law enforcement, the court system, local government, business and health care and community providers. Key coalition members include National Alliance on Mental Illness California, California Hospital Association, Mental Health America of California, the California State Sheriff’s Association, the California State Association of Counties, the California Police Chief’s Association, and Service Employees International Union State Council. The Coalition’s goal is to raise awareness of behavioral health issues and have candidates for federal, state and local office make their positions known during the campaign. Campaign launch events will be held throughout the state, followed by media events and forums during the General Election campaign.

To emphasize behavioral health as a key 2018 campaign issue, the Coalition engaged well-known Democratic polling firm David Binder Research to conduct one of the first statewide surveys of November General Election voters to gauge awareness of behavioral health issues and the priority voters place on candidates addressing these issues. Key findings of Binder’s survey of 800 likely voters, conducted from June 6-11, 2018 include:

- ***89 percent of likely voters are aware of mental illness and drug and alcohol use disorders.***
- ***87 percent of likely voters believe improvement is needed regarding the access that people have to mental health, drug and alcohol use services in California.***
- ***92 percent of likely voters believe that, compared to other issues facing voters, California must prioritize mental health and drug and alcohol use disorders.***
- ***85 percent of likely voters say that, in considering which candidates to vote for in this November's election, it is personally important to them that candidates prioritize improving mental health and drug and alcohol addiction.***
- ***89 percent of likely voters support increasing access to care for people with behavioral health conditions.***
- ***72 percent of likely voters believe that the State of California should establish a cabinet-level position dedicated to overseeing the state's mental illness and drug and alcohol use disorder system.***

“In the months ahead, Behavioral Health Action will be a catalyst to drive awareness, action and accountability,” said CEO, National Alliance on Mental Illness-California, Jessica Cruz. “We will use the November election as an opportunity to engage California leaders and candidates for office at all levels, and encourage them to prioritize and share their vision on these issues.”

About Behavioral Health Action

The Behavioral Health Action Coalition is designed to drive awareness and educate policymakers and stakeholders about the need to make behavioral health a top priority in California. More information can be found at behavioralhealthaction.org.

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