

**Senate Budget Statement**  
**2/25/16**

**WACMHC/CHNW LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY THAT WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT IN THE SENATE BUDGET:**

- **Transferring the Blind, Disabled and COPES Population from Managed Care to Fee For Service May Be Considered a Cut to the Safety Net**

**WACMHC/CHNW LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES NOT SUPPORTED IN THE SENATE BUDGET:**

- **Behavioral Health Integration – Middle Adopter Regions**
- **Loan Repayment Program Expanded for Behavioral Health Providers**

Statement

Community health centers are concerned that the Senate budget proposal potentially impacts the health care safety net by transferring the blind, disabled and Community Options Program Entry System (COPES) population from managed care to fee for service. The services that managed care provides this population, including care coordination, utilization management, and connections to primary care, are essential to our patients' health. We are disappointed that it does little to strengthen the early intervention side of the mental health system, missing an opportunity to address our state's mental health crisis with cost-effective solutions.

The Senate's budget is a step backwards. The investments that Washington State has made in health care safety net programs are paying off for people's health and security and the state economy. The legislature must protect those investments by continuing to support programs that provide coverage and access to care.

The Senate's budget neglects to fix the Health Professional Loan Repayment program to include behavioral health specialists, such as social workers and psychologists. In fact, it takes \$1 million out of this program over the next two years! Without this fix, community health centers will continue struggling to attract mental health providers to work in underserved rural and urban areas, where provider shortages hinder access to care for low-income Washingtonians. This insufficient workforce hampers the state's goal of integrating behavioral health into primary care settings.

The budget also fails to accelerate the pace of behavioral health integration in key regions. Health centers are advocating for funding for King and Pierce Counties and North Central Washington to achieve behavioral health integration two and a half years ahead of the state's goal of 2020, in order to generate valuable learning.

Community health centers urge the Senate and the House to not only maintain steady funding for the health care safety net, but also make progress on funding prevention and early intervention mental health solutions to address our current mental health crisis.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

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