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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

June 29, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JODY B. HICE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

GOP HEALTHCARE BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, Members on both sides of the aisle have offered their share of passionate words about the GOP healthcare bill.

And as can happen, the debate has been deeply polarized here, leaving Americans to wonder sometimes whether the facts get obstructed by the politics of the day.

So I want to take a minute and share what some experts have had to say

about the Republican healthcare proposal. These are not politicians; far from it. These words come from folks who operate outside the walls of Washington's halls and have dedicated themselves to fighting for those struggling with mental illness.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the Republican healthcare plan will "force people with mental illness out of work, onto the streets, and into jails and emergency rooms."

The legislation "shows dangerous disregard for the well-being of people with substance use disorders and their families and erases decades of progress," says the Association for Addiction Professionals.

Mental Health America tells us that this bill "will ultimately do significant harm to people with all chronic conditions, including mental illness, while increasing the cost of healthcare to everyone."

The National Association for Rural Mental Health agrees, saying, "these actions will leave millions of Americans with serious mental health and substance use conditions without life-sustaining and essential health insurance coverage, especially at a time when the Nation is suffering from the largest opioid epidemic in history."

In short, this bill would be, according to the American Psychiatric Association, "particularly devastating to the millions of Americans in need of mental health and substance use treatment."

Mr. Speaker, these groups are not political organizations. They are doctors; they are healthcare professionals; they are patients; they are advocates who have dedicated their lives day and night to filling the gaps of a badly broken mental health system. Take it from them.

This is what TrumpCare is offering our country. This is what they are trying to sell us at a time when we are

losing nearly 100 Americans a day to an opioid epidemic. This is what is being negotiated behind closed doors as we speak while the rest of us read reports that tell us that the death toll from opioids could reach well over half a million people in the next decade.

So let me be clear: You cannot advocate for comprehensive mental health reform and then stand on the opposite side of nearly every major mental health organization in this country. You cannot claim to be a champion for those suffering from mental illness and then support a bill that guts funding for Medicaid, which is the largest payer of mental healthcare in this country.

You cannot say that you are committed to addressing the opioid epidemic and then stand behind a piece of legislation that gives insurance companies cover to deny those patients addiction treatment and to tell those in the grips of addiction to summon just a little more will.

You have to choose: With these families or with this bill? Which side are you on?

JULY AS PARKS AND RECREATION MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I introduced a resolution with Congresswoman NIKI TSONGAS to designate July as Parks and Recreation Month. It is a fitting time to celebrate our Federal, State, and local parks and recreation systems as so many start this summer season by visiting these facilities that are available within our communities or even a short commute.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 406 recognizes the important role that public parks, recreation facilities, and activities plays in the lives of Americans and the

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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