

## **Letter: Vote 'No' on Q1 to preserve behavioral health services – Berkshire Eagle, October 28, 2018**

To the editor:

As social workers who care greatly for our community hospital and for protecting an already frail behavioral health and substance use treatment system, we strongly urge all to vote "No" on ballot question 1.

Behavioral health and substance use care is already difficult to access due to a long history of being under-reimbursed. If this ballot question passes, it will result, for starters, in closure of 1,000 inpatient behavioral health beds in the state. Inpatient and outpatient behavioral health and substance use services will close throughout the commonwealth. Shortages of inpatient beds will result in significantly increased wait times in emergency departments with patients and families in crisis expected to wait for days to be admitted to the appropriate level of behavioral health care. Those seeking an inpatient bed for substance use treatment will not be held in the emergency room, and will be turned away and placed on a wait list until a bed becomes available.

While RNs have an important role in providing behavioral health and substance use care, they are one part of a collaborative team approach that is prevalent in healthcare. A multidisciplinary team approach leveraging expertise and skill of a team of professionals — psychiatrists, social workers, certified addiction counselors, mental health clinicians, psychologists, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, psychiatric aides, unit coordinators, recovery specialists, psychiatry safety specialist and LPNs as well as RNs ensure patients receive excellent and individualized care.

We are working very hard, against a backdrop of declining government and commercial insurance reimbursement, to turn the tide against the opioid epidemic, rising suicide rates and also care for many others suffering with depression, anxiety and a host of challenges brought on by too much stress. Now more than ever, we need the whole team working together to take care of our community. Please vote "No" on Question 1.

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