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## **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

### **Plan Must Cover Mental Health**

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The Courant's Jan. 13 editorial "Equal Treatment For All" highlighted a troubling exclusion in the governor's proposed health insurance plan: mental health services. In fact, the Charter Oak plan complies with all state mandates except one: mental health parity. The stigmatizing message that this action communicates is both disturbing and discriminatory, particularly when studies confirm that the fiscal impact of such coverage, when managed, is nearly imperceptible.

Two years ago, Gov. M. Jodi Rell announced that Connecticut was one of seven states to receive a federal mental health transformation grant, with the goal of transforming mental health services and associated systems in Connecticut. As a member of the council that oversees that grant, I attend frequent meetings where state agency representatives discuss strategies to expand access to mental health services and eliminate stigma. Unfortunately, the exclusion in the Charter Oak plan gives those words a somewhat hollow ring.

There is a Native American saying that captures the hypocrisy reflected in the Charter Oak plan's exclusion: Your acts speak so loudly I cannot hear your words.

I urge the governor to amend the request for bids for the Charter Oak plan to cover mental health services. This would communicate to all that she will not endorse stigma and inequality.

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