

Stand up for mental health care

Sara Doruska, Ankeny
Letter to the Editor, Nov. 8, 2016

Recently, A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy held an event called “Stand Up for Mental Health Care.” This event brought together Ankeny’s residents and candidates for the state Legislature to consider mental health care accessibility and to make concrete proposals for improvement.

The 150-plus attendees heard that Iowa ranks 47th in the U.S. for psychiatrists, and on average, Iowans wait 47 days for an initial psychiatric appointment. They heard real stories about the effects of inadequate care: a son who didn’t receive enough supervision in his group home to prevent his accidental death, and a daughter whose pleas for help went unanswered because she “looked put-together on the outside” despite feeling suicidal. Nearly every seat emptied when the crowd was asked to stand if they or a family member had been affected by mental illness.

Reps. Kevin Koester and John Landon and their opponents, Heather Matson and Andrea Phillips, were asked to commit to the following: Creating and funding a loan forgiveness program for mental health care providers; allowing counties to adjust their mental health tax levies to provide ongoing adequate funding of county programs; and joining a mental health caucus at the Capitol during the next legislative session. All candidates committed their support to these efforts.

We are thankful to the attendees who stood up for mental health care that night, and who will continue to do so in the future. We encourage all Iowans to join in our efforts.

— *Sara Doruska, Ankeny*

Link to article: <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/readers/2016/11/08/stand-up-mental-health-care/93437252/>