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LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Obamacare replacement would hurt veterans

LYNTORIA WILLIAMS   *Mar 23, 2017*

The GOP plan to repeal the Affordable Care Act and cut Medicaid is a bad deal for Missouri. I expect our members of Congress to stand up for the best interest of fellow Missourians.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, this bill will lead to premiums increasing by 20-25 percent and would leave 18 million more Americans uninsured in the first year.

This bill will also severely hurt the men and women who have served our country — the veterans we have promised to care for. While veterans are currently eligible to receive their health care through the VA, roughly 3 million receive health care through outside sources such as employer-provided insurance, the marketplace or Medicaid.

If these benefits are lost or premiums increase, these veterans are more likely to seek treatment from the VA. This could cause further strain on an already strained system. This could be worsened if the VA is unable to fill vacancies left open by the recent federal hiring freeze.

As a social work intern at the VA, I have seen veterans frustrated by long delays because they do not have timely access to health care, mental health or substance use treatment. We need to increase access to care, especially needed services and coverage for our veterans, not roll them back.

This bill will hurt the people who live in our state. I urge our members of Congress to oppose this, and all readers to reach out to our representatives.

Lyntoria Williams is a graduate social worker intern.