



Mental health care community applauds Kasich for Medicaid expansion: letter to the editor



By [Other Voices](#)

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The editorial on Monday titled "[Funding Cuyahoga County's fight against mental illness](#)" makes some very good points. The behavioral health systems in our country, and specifically our state, are underfunded. Could we use more money? The simple answer is yes.

Tracy Plouck, director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health, is aware of this and was able to secure \$1.8 million from the governor's office for the Cuyahoga County-based, 72-hour crisis stabilization unit request, which was presented to her and her staff from the Cuyahoga County mental health community.

In light of the mass shootings and street violence in our cities, we know the problems are great and things do need to change. It is time that we stop placing blame, fortify our efforts and collaborate. There are so many people to serve with a limited amount of money. With all of the fiscal issues facing our country, I think it is time to concentrate on creating new, innovative, cost-saving solutions.

On Monday, Plouck hosted a webinar presented by the governor's office, detailing his plan to seek Medicaid expansion. There was a significant grass-roots advocacy campaign that had begun weeks before the Feb. 4 date. The governor heard our requests. As a result, many letters of appreciation have been sent applauding this decision. The effects are far reaching for all Ohioans, particularly our Cuyahoga County residents. In January 2014, we will need less money for fee-for-service as individuals are insured. It was made clear that the money not used on fee-for-service can then be diverted into non-covered needs (e.g., supportive employment, housing and helping individuals leave nursing homes who are capable of living in the community, to name a few). The webinar is available for all to view on the [Governor's Office of Health Transformation website](#).

In my opinion, it is now time for our county to begin planning on how to move into this new world of health care. The beauty of it is that it is not just about mental health care. We are finally beginning to move into the treatment of the whole person. Soon, care will be integrated, coordinated and managed to minimize noncompliance, reduce recidivism, reduce the use of emergency rooms, and save and extend lives.

I, for one, am very hopeful about the future of mental health care. I extend my sincerest gratitude to Gov. John Kasich and the entire OHT team.

Esther Pla, Beachwood

Pla is president and CEO of [Connections: Health, Wellness, Advocacy](#).

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