



**Sacramento, CA** – On Tuesday, March 1, 2022, President Joe Biden delivered his first State of the Union Address to a Nation struggling with a growing behavioral health crisis, exacerbated by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic that has tested the emotional and physical wellbeing of Americans of all ages. In a show of historic commitment to addressing the nation’s mental health and substance use crisis, President Biden has unveiled his administration’s strategy to reshape how behavioral health is understood and treated within the United States.

*“So tonight, I’m offering a Unity Agenda for the Nation. Four big things we can do together.*

*First, beat the opioid epidemic.*

*There is so much we can do. Increase funding for prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery.*

*Get rid of outdated rules that stop doctors from prescribing treatments . . .*

*If you’re suffering from addiction, know you are not alone. I believe in recovery, and I celebrate the 23 million Americans in recovery.*

*Second, let’s take on mental health. Especially among our children, whose lives and education have been turned upside down.*

*And let’s get all Americans the mental health services they need. More people they can turn to for help, and full parity between physical and mental health care.” – President Joe Biden, State of the Union Address*

Some of the key investments in President Biden’s strategy include:

- Addressing the severe shortage of providers and meeting people where they are with a bigger, more diverse, and culturally competent workforce;
- Making additional investments to staff up and shore up crisis centers to support the launch of 988;
- Investing in school mental health professionals in both the FY 22 and 23 budgets;
- Expanding early childhood and school-based intervention services and supports; and
- Expanding and strengthening parity so that mental health benefits are covered at the same level as physical health care benefits, and integrating mental health and substance use treatment into primary care settings

The California Alliance of Child and Family Services, along with our partners from Children Now and the California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executive, Inc, have issued the following statements:



“The California Alliance of Child and Family Services applauds President Biden and his Administration on the historic investment in children and youth behavioral health,” said Chris Stoner-Mertz, CEO of CA Alliance. “Covid-19 has deeply impacted our nation, exacerbating a mental health and substance use crisis that was already reaching an alarming peak before the pandemic started. The President’s commitment to addressing this crisis through a multi-point strategy, as well as acknowledging the disproportionate impact these issues have on Black, Brown, and LGBTQ+ communities, is a giant step forward in the full recovery of our Nation.”

“Children Now is thrilled to see this proposed level of federal investment supporting children’s mental health,” said Ted Lempert, President of Children Now. “California must capitalize on this opportunity by increasing its investments in schools and in communities in order to respond to this urgent crisis.”

"The California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives is thrilled to see the level of commitment on behalf of President Biden and the Administration on mental health and substance use disorders. We are particularly excited to see dedication on workforce development, enforcement of parity laws, attention on youth and schools, and integration of mental health and substance use into primary care,” said Tyler Rinde, Executive Director of CAADPE. “Behavioral health, and particularly substance use, was at a crisis point prior to the pandemic and now two years in, the situation has only gotten worse on the ground with more than a hundred thousand Americans dying by overdose last year. We believe that it is especially timely for this level of investment from our federal partners.”

**[For more detailed information on the issues addressed in the State of the Union, find the White House “FACT SHEET” by clicking here.](#)**