

Las Cruces Sun News.

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Letters to the editor: On health care (or lack thereof) in Las Cruces

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'Dying to see the doctor'

Need a health care specialist? Hurry up and wait Las Cruces. Long wait times or zero availability for appointments have Las Crucians heading to El Paso, Albuquerque, or Mexico to get urgent procedures done.

New Mexico ranks 39th when it comes to health care and is the leading state in older physicians, with an estimated 33% preparing to retire in the next ten years. Some have left due to the Medical Malpractice Act (HB75) passage that raised the amount a physician can be sued for punitive damages to \$4 million, making it difficult for doctors to get insurance companies to cover them. This might explain part of New Mexico's low retention rate of 38%. New Mexicans deserve better and have a right to receive health care on time.

If we want to keep physicians in Las Cruces, it is time to address low wages, unsafe staffing shortages, and burnout. New Mexico needs to offer incentives to keep graduating medical students in the state by helping to pay off student debt and lowering insurance costs. New Mexicans need to welcome new doctors with unconventional recruitment packages that offer childcare subsidies, a down payment for housing, and repayment for moving expenses. If we do not care for our doctors, they will not care for us. Ignoring this issue will give new meaning to the expression "dying to see the doctor."

Joy Monge, Las Cruces

Lack of mental health care persists

I knew the pandemic was going to disproportionately affect our student population here in Doña Ana County, because of socio-economics, ignorance and the usual problems associated

with most first-generation and EOL students. Now, just when we thought it was over, and see infections increasing like before and hospitals filling up.

But especially troubling is the fact that there are not enough mental health professionals or providers in the area. I can't find a qualified psychiatrist or prescribing-psychologist who is accepting new patients. Getting a mental health counselor for my daughter has been a challenge, also.

We are in a crucial time when mental health providers aren't accepting new patients. Most that are here, are not accepting new patients. It shouldn't be like this, especially for someone who is employed, educated, and willing to see these specialist. I can only imagine how bad it is for those less fortunate in our communities.

Governor, department secretaries, county and city governments throughout the state need to prioritize mental health on all of their strategic plans and annual funding!

Jose Aranda, Las Cruces