

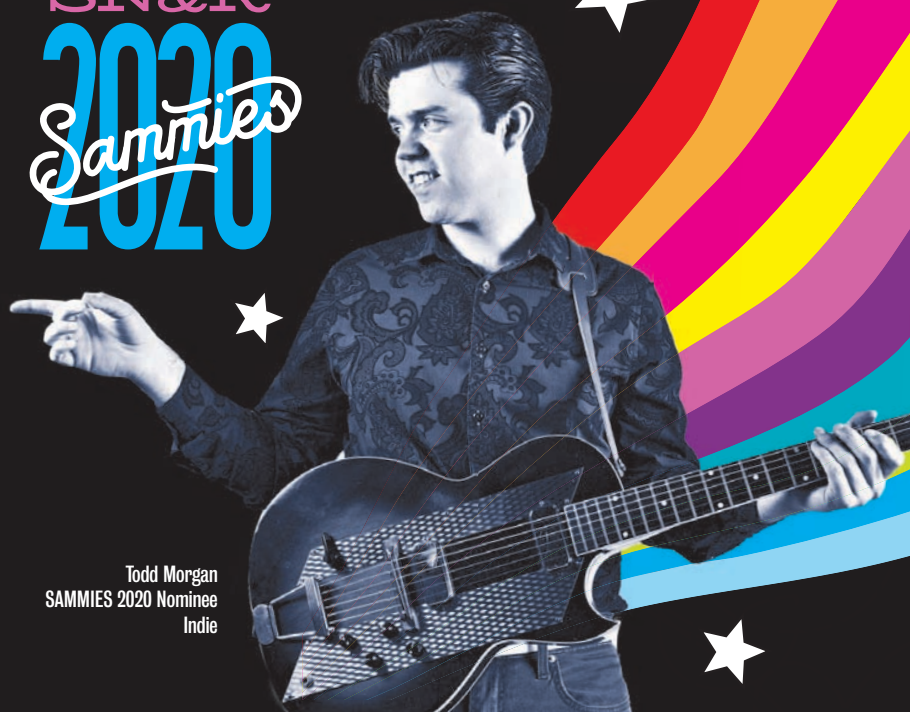
LAST CHANCE TO VOTE

for the best

MUSIC-MAKERS

IN SACRAMENTO

SN&R
2020
Sammy's



Todd Morgan
SAMMIES 2020 Nominee
Indie

VOTING ENDS 03.11.20

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“NEWSOM’S TO-DO LIST” *continued from page 15*

to special rules. These waivers are expiring this year, which could present an opportunity to change how the Medicaid program is both funded and run, assuming the Trump administration permits them.

Link housing and services

For some people with serious mental illnesses and substance-use disorders, hope of recovery can be severely impeded by the lack of a place to sleep. Services without housing don’t work well for them; neither does housing without services.

One problem the governor referenced in his address: The state’s spate of board and care home closures. Newsom said he wants to stabilize and expand the number of these homes, but that will prove costly.

The homes are rarely viewed as an ideal housing model for low-income people with mental illness and other disabilities. Some are plagued with rat and bedbug infestations.

But they are often the only relatively affordable housing option available to a very vulnerable population. Tenants pay a government-set monthly rent of \$1,058 out of their monthly federal SSI checks to cover

housing, 24-hour-care and three daily meals.

Whither mental health parity?

One topic that the governor did not bring up during his State of the State was his desire to strengthen enforcement of mental health parity laws, which hold private insurers accountable for providing equal access to health and mental health care.

He spoke forcefully on the topic when he revealed his budget plan in January, saying he plans to go “aggressively on the parity issue as a mandate and a mission.”

What that increased enforcement will look like remains to be seen. The governor is expected to be more specific in the spring, when he releases his revised budget.

Legislation to strengthen parity laws in the state has failed repeatedly in recent years.

The push for parity reflects the fact that many Californians are worried about their access to mental health care. According to a poll released in February by the California Health Care Foundation, for the second year in a row, people listed access to mental health care as a top mental health concern.

The statewide shortage of mental health providers is another significant issue that wasn’t discussed during the State of the State, but will be a key component of any efforts to reform the state’s troubled mental health care system. □

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