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Reform with Care: Expanding Mental Health Conservatorships in California

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For fifty years, policymakers, clinicians, and advocates have agreed that people living with serious psychiatric disabilities should have access to voluntary, community-based care. Since the 1960s, the number of public hospital beds available for severe mental illness has decreased by 90%. There is ongoing debate as to whether crises of patient homelessness and incarceration are due to inadequate resources or the legal inability to force people into treatment. With this in mind, policymakers and other leaders are now considering loosening the criteria for involuntary treatment and placing people in locked facilities.