

de la Guerra, Sheila

Public Comment : Health & Human
Services

From: Nicole Llamas <ask.a.llama@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 10, 2021 11:40 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: BWell Budget hearing comment

Behavioral Wellness

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Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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To Whom It May Concern,

As a clinician who works in one of our mental health clinics, I can verify that we have been begging and screaming for more clinical staff consistently throughout the COVID pandemic and even before. The sheer number of referrals we have been receiving in the last year, and the spike in crisis calls, have left us drowning and burning out across both north and south county. You can read the article recently published in the Independent for a sliver of what this understaffed state has done to the clients we have been trying to serve.

If there is any budget, and we all know the money does exist despite what we are told by admin, our clinics ALL need more clinical staff. Adult, children's, crisis, all of them in all regions of our county need help, and we need it NOW. We do not wish to see more murders, suicides, and other tragedies on our watch. We DO wish to provide high quality care, without damage to our personal lives and health.

Nicole Llamas, LMFT

de la Guerra, Sheila

From: Elina Salminen <salminen.elina.m@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 10, 2021 7:50 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Agenda Item A-28

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Board of Supervisors:

I hope you are well in these challenging times! I'm writing to give comment on next year's budget. I am a Santa Barbara city resident, a UCSB staff member, and an immigrant. As I live downtown, I daily see how unjustly wealth and resources are distributed in our community, and how a lack of mental health resources create human suffering and, occasionally, unsafe interactions as I go about my day. Research has shown over and over again that increased policing is not the solution and, indeed, often makes things worse. I was also personally horrified to realize how impossible it is to find a shelter spot or resources: In an attempt to help a homeless community member, I called up every shelter. Most didn't pick up, and one said they had not had any available beds for a year.

As such, I urge you to consider the following for next year's budget:

- Reduce Sheriff's Office funding by a *minimum* of \$26.7million and 165 FTE's this year in order to bring their office's budget in line with or below comparable counties.
- Instead, funnel the money to some or all of the following, all of which are the most effective ways to improve safety and human dignity in our community:
 - Healing Justice Santa Barbara's partnership with the Healing Center at UCSB's Hosford Clinic
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 - Behavioral Wellness Department to provide non-jail alternatives for mental health and addiction needs
 - Affordable housing initiatives and shelters
 - Success Stories Program
 - Freedom to Choose
 - Other well established, highly effective grass-roots organizations such as El Centro, Freedom 4 Youth, CAUSE, Ethnic Studies Now!

Thank you for creating a safer, healthier community for all of us.

Yours,
Elina Salminen

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de la Guerra, Sheila

From: Madeline Dippel <madelinedippel@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 10, 2021 8:42 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Public Comment for 4/12/21

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Supervisor Board of Supervisors,

As a resident of Santa Barbara County for the past seven years, I care deeply about my community and how the dollars that community members, like myself, put into this county, are spent. Money allocated by the Board of Supervisors should be used exclusively for the betterment of community; in ways that improve the health and safety of *all* our community members rather than over-funding institutions which have been proven to harm large sections of our community with their current practices.

Over-funding the prison system, for example, does nothing to create a safer community because incarceration does not address the root problems behind most "criminal" activity. Studies have shown that trauma and poverty are the two largest influences on "criminal" behavior and incarceration is an experience that is accompanied by socio-economic marginalization and only serves to further isolate those individuals from our community further, making it harder for us to help them to become productive members of our community. Rather than investing in programs and organizations which help people who have been traumatized by the prison system, \$255million (68.3%) of the County's current public safety budget is invested into the supervision (Probation), prosecution (District Attorney), and policing and incarceration (Sheriff) of community members, all of which create additional trauma and reinforce cycles of poverty, thereby decreasing public safety.

In addition to the fact that incarceration is not an effective method for addressing "criminal activity", incarceration is also responsible for increasing racial inequities that exist in our community. SB County disproportionately incarcerates Black and Brown community members, who are already socio-economically marginalized through interconnected racist systems in our county related to housing, education, employment, healthcare, etc.

So, in order to better help all members of our community, regardless of race, mental health or income status, I urge the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors to make the following changes this for the 2021-2022 fiscal year:

1. Reduce Sheriff's Office funding by a *minimum* of \$26.7million and 165 FTE's this year in order to support a consistent decline of average daily jail population and bring their office's budget in line with or below comparable counties.

Instead, invest this \$26.7million in:

1. Community-based organizations and initiatives led by folks who have similar identities and life experiences to those who are most impacted by the criminal legal system in order to utilize alternatives to incarceration; true community-based diversion programs that are not affiliated with law enforcement or criminal legal institutions, and more practical and effective transitional services for individuals in custody. Examples of appropriate community-based allocations include funding for:

- Healing Justice Santa Barbara's partnership with the Healing Center at UCSB's Hosford Clinic which provides Black community members with free culturally competent and trauma informed professional mental health services.
 - Note: Changes to Sheriff practices such as being in plain clothes while on duty, as demonstrated by SBPD, are far from adequate when it comes to increasing mental health support for community members that are marginalized.
- Local organizations such as Healing Justice Santa Barbara, El Centro, Freedom 4 Youth, CAUSE, Ethnic Studies Now!, and many others who have been doing this work for many years while severely underfunded. These organizations provide services in the fields of mental health, education, employment, leadership, housing, clothing, food access, violence prevention, immigration, environmental protection, self-esteem and efficacy, arts & culture, etc..
- Success Stories Program which utilizes a dialogic approach to addressing the implications of patriarchy and toxic masculinity, as they repeatedly manifest in the objectification of womxn, the perceived need to show physical dominance or violence over others in order to be "more of a man", and the prioritization of money over healthy relationships. Local nonprofit Freedom 4 Youth has trained facilitators of this program.
- Freedom to Choose which supports individuals in the development of skills related to communication and relationships, fosters emotional intelligence, and dives into the root causes of impulsive, anger-driven, trauma-reactionary behaviors.

2. Affordable housing initiatives in order to accelerate the currently tenuous and sometimes impossible process of finding housing, which can take several years or force local residents to relocate due to cost of living. The lack of affordable and accessible housing for low-income residents disproportionately impacts Black and Brown community members, which increases the likelihood of involvement in the criminal legal system.

I would also like to support the implementation of the demands made by CLUE SB as stated below:

1. Increase funding for the Public Defender's Office to expand holistic advocacy and culturally competent staff to improve advocacy across the racial/ethnic spectrum.

2. Fund seed money to study a possible Civilian Oversight Commission to help assure transparency and accountability from the Sheriff's Office, alter the policing practices and procedures that reinforce trauma, and deter police misconduct.

- Possible results of this include the immediate stop to the Sheriff's cooperation with Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE), deputy trainings on language justice best practices, and regularly required cultural competency and anti-racism trainings.

3. Reallocate more funds for the Behavioral Wellness Department to provide non-jail alternatives for mental health and addiction needs.

As I mentioned before, it's important that our community's money be spent towards what will create an inclusive and safe environment for all those who live in Santa Barbara County. So, I urge you to approve this change in budget as a show of respect for the values and needs of our fellow community members.

Thank you.

Best, Madeline Dippel
Concerned Community Member

de la Guerra, Sheila

From: Merushka Bisetty <merushka@drbisetty.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 11, 2021 4:26 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: BOS Budget Hearing Public Comment for 4/12

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

Please find my comments below. I am requesting that this be **read into the record** for the 4/12 and perhaps 4/14 Budget Workshop. The below comment meets the 250 word limit.

My name is Merushka Bisetty & I am a psychologist with expertise in clinical & forensic psychology. I am also an Adjunct Professor of psychopathology & criminal-legal issues. I've worked in community-based & governmental agencies, most recently at BWELL Justice Alliance where I conducted IST placement recommendations & provided treatment at the PHF, CRT's, shelters, clinics & homes. I've provided psychotherapy & case management services that directly linked clients to vital resources (monetary benefits, food, clothing, jobs, & housing). I helped clients & families navigate through the MH & CJ systems. This whole-person approach to care is creative, effective, & necessary. I am currently partnering with Jeff Gaddess, Ph.D., & law, policy & health experts on implementing an inclusive community-led model (Integrated Services Facility) that provides individualized & intensive one-on-one linkage to mental health (MH), medical, & substance use disorder (SUD) care. It links to attorneys, social, vocational & educational services & opportunities for civic engagement. In addition to increasing funding to recruit & retain compassionate & competent BWELL & BSU co-respond staff, we need to invest in community-led care. Research demonstrates that providing intensive, wraparound & non-punitive, culturally-sensitive care in the community mitigates risk of re-incarceration, psychiatric hospitalization, & homelessness. We believe that preventative & proactive measures focused on the needs of people in crisis, along with addressing the real concerns of community members & local businesses, is a far more successful approach than reactive measures. We are asking for support & are seeking funding for the above-mentioned model.

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Warmly,
Merushka Bisetty, Psy.D

de la Guerra, Sheila

From: Ian Baucke <ianbaucke@gwmail.gwu.edu>
Sent: Sunday, April 11, 2021 5:20 PM
To: sbcob
Cc: merushka@drbisetty.com; Christian Alonso
Subject: SBYD Public Comment for 4/12 Supervisors Meeting

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

I would like to submit the following written public comment to be read into the record at tomorrow's budget meeting on diversion and mental health services:

Dear Supervisors,

My name is Ian Baucke and I am writing on behalf of Santa Barbara Young Democrats to express our strong support for an increase in funding and staffing resources for the county's Co-Response program and other mental health services.

This is a critical opportunity to make a significant investment in the mental health and safety of your constituents so it is imperative that we take this moment to double down on the essential services provided by Santa Barbara's mental health professionals. Diverting people from the dehumanizing and counterproductive criminal process is what just, equitable, and fiscally sound policy looks like. Failing to safeguard these services from underfunding and understaffing will have a direct negative impact on county staff, Santa Barbara families, and those who need help most.

Budgets are reflections of not only our priorities but also our values. Please take this opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to keeping all of your constituents safe, healthy, and free. It is essential that our county government embrace forward-thinking and effective policies like diversion as we seek to dismantle systemic inequity and injustice in local law enforcement.

The Board of Supervisors must take immediate action on its expressed support for mental healthcare by making a substantial investment in resources for co-response, diversion, acute care, and increased community-led and integrative whole-person care. Thank you for your time and your public service.

Sincerely,

Ian Baucke
Santa Barbara Young Democrats

de la Guerra, Sheila

From: Ehren, Aviva
Sent: Monday, April 12, 2021 12:11 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: Public comment for budget meeting

I'm writing this in order to inform of the dire need to hire 2 more clinicians for the Santa Barbara Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) and TAY-FSP programs. Services are provided for seriously emotionally disturbed adolescents and young adults between the ages of 16-26 years old who are severely and persistently mentally ill. Currently, there is only one clinician trying her utmost to serve both of these programs for South county. Please prioritize hiring front line staff for the Santa Barbara TAY program and within all Behavioral Wellness programs as it is an imperative for the sustainability of services being provided and consequently, for the clients who are in dire need of support.

Thank you!

Sent from my iPhone

Ramirez, Angelica

From: Laurence Severance <LJSeverance@msn.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2021 9:01 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: Public comment regarding 2021-2022 budget for Behavioral Wellness
Attachments: LJS.letter.supporting.Behavioral.Wellness.docx

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Clerk of the Board,

Please include and distribute the attached letter as public comment for the County Supervisors' 2021-2022 budget agenda topic of Behavioral Wellness scheduled Wednesday, April 14th. Please read this letter into the record when public comment is invited during the budget workshop regarding Behavioral Wellness.

Thank you,
Laurence Severance
(206 250-5855 (cell))

214 Selrose Lane,
Santa Barbara, CA 93109

April 13, 2021

Dear County Supervisors:

Re: 2021-2022 budget funding for Behavioral Wellness

I write to express my strong support for additional funding to develop community-based Behavioral Wellness resources to address underserved mentally ill. More of these resources are particularly needed for justice-involved citizens who would be eligible for diversion into treatment in lieu of jail and criminal charges if adequate mental health resources are available.

I have personally spoken with members of our County Public Defender's Racial Justice Committee who estimate that 50% or more of their clients have mental health, addiction or a combination of those issues as underlying causes for conduct causing them to become justice-involved. Their focus on "holistic advocacy" highlights this problem and calls for more resources for this underserved segment of our population. More mental health resources will reduce our jail population, help reduce recidivism, make our communities safer, and help keep families intact.

Please substantially increase funding for Behavior Wellness *and* for the Public Defender's "holistic advocacy" to better serve justice-involved people with mental health challenges. Increased funding for Behavioral Wellness and "holistic advocacy" go hand in hand to improve our criminal justice system.

Very sincerely yours,

Laurence Severance