



2016 JUN 15 PM 2:19

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA
CLERK OF THE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

June 15, 2016

Hon. Salud Carbajal
Hon. Janet Wolf
Hon. Doreen Farr
Hon. Peter Adam
Hon. Steve Lavagnino
Members of the Board of Supervisors
Santa Barbara County

Subject: Budget FY 2017 for Mental Health Treatment Beds

Dear Members of the Board:

As a parent of a young adult mental health client, and as the current President of the Board of Families ACT!, I am writing to sincerely thank you for the attention your board has given to improving our County's mental health services. I wish also, however, to remind you, during the current county budget deliberations, that our County's Behavioral Wellness department is still considerably underfunded by comparison to counties of comparable size and demographics elsewhere in California. The 2013 Tri-West report that was commissioned by your board noted this fact and recommended that our county mental health department receive \$9M in General Fund contributions years ago.

The economic downturn of 2008-9 and the transition between successive directors of our county mental health and alcohol and drug services department have somewhat obscured critical unmet needs of our population with mental health conditions. The number of seriously mentally ill persons whom we see living on our streets is only the tip of the iceberg, but a very graphic and painful reminder of our duty, as a county, to serve those in our community with mental health and substance use conditions

At a time when the entire world has decried the sky-high U.S. incarceration rates and the practice of incarcerating persons with mental health and complex needs for lack of treatment services in the community, the fact that Santa Barbara County has chosen to commit millions of dollars to house 379 inmates in new jail and to the refurbishing of the existing jail will be seen someday as a grave error unless we also bring funding levels up to par for alternatives to incarceration for county residents with mental health disabilities and complex needs who cycle through our revolving door.

Just as significant funds were set aside annually for a new jail, significant funds need to be set aside to bring Santa Barbara County up to par in terms of the residential treatment and supportive housing needs of the large population with mental health and co-occurring disorders.

The current balance in the mental health fund must be retained for this purpose today and we urge you to give serious consideration to identifying additional funding sources to begin to redress the critical shortage of both inpatient and outpatient beds in our county.

We are dismayed that the Capital Needs report from the County Behavioral Wellness department was not presented to the board before the current budget deliberations after all the work that our organization and the HEART team have put into preparing this report for well over a year. The HEART team agreed on five immediate priority needs related to in-patient as well as out-patient needs and housing:

- 100 residential treatment beds provided by an Adult Residential Facility licensed facility such as Psynergy Programs, Inc. – possibly on county land in Santa Maria
- Crisis Residential Center in Lompoc
- The Residences at Depot Street in Santa Maria
- 10-12 beds in master-leased houses
- 10 IMD beds

Stepping into a glaring gap in our county's continuum of care, Families ACT! worked in collaboration with Frank Thompson, Families ACT! to come up with a model which makes use of Federal Tax Credits and residential and co-locates treatment beds with permanent supportive housing units. Dr. Gleghorn has favored the kind of model Psynergy Programs, Inc. provides. That's OK with us as long as the stock of treatment beds is increased. We agree that Psynergy has an excellent track record for providing the kinds of residential treatment services our county mental health clients require and we urge you to explore ways in which our county can facilitate the creation of a Psynergy facility in Santa Barbara County.

We thank you for your consideration of the need to allocate funds and to consider dedicating county land for critically needed residential treatment beds and supportive housing facilities for this growing and vulnerable population. We are eager to serve as a resource to you and your staff and to meet with the County CEO's office and the Director and Deputy Director of Behavior Wellness to explore solutions to these ongoing needs. Our families remain committed to informing you about the ongoing mental health needs of our community as well as the stories of success and recovery.

Sincerely,



Rod Pearson
President of the Board