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February 24, 2020

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

RE: Administrative Agenda Item 6 - February 25, 2020

Honorable Supervisors,

We at Families ACT! wholeheartedly support the recommendation by the Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors in support of a California state waiver from the Institutions of Mental Disease (IMD) Exclusion prohibiting the use of federal Medicaid funding to cover services provided in residential treatment facilities with more than 16 beds for adults 21-65 years of age with a severe mental health diagnosis. If the IMD exclusion is waived, our state could apply for federal funds to increase the number of psychiatric beds.

The lack of treatment beds and the immense suffering it has contributed to, has been one of the main conditions Families ACT! has advocated to change. The IMD beds are a critically important element in the continuum of care for people with severe mental health conditions, and the cost of this level of treatment for the number of our Santa Barbara County patients in need of it would be a burden to the County.

When people in need of this level of care are denied it, many suffer and die on the streets, while others languish in our jails which were designed not as treatment facilities but as punitive, or at best "correctional facilities". It is both cruel and unjust for jails and prisons to house people who should be in a hospital or treatment facility. Far too often, they end up incarcerated after a simple misinterpretation or misperception of what someone else has done or said. The cost, not only in human dollars, but in suffering is untenable.

We appreciate the individual Supervisors efforts to comprehend the complexities of this increasingly critical issue and trust that the Board will take the opportunity to enjoy California state officials to redress the current imbalance and injustice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Suzanne Riordan", written in a cursive style.

Suzanne Riordan
Executive Director
Families ACT!