



Sheila de la Guerra

# Public Comment

**From:** Suzanne Riordan <suzanne@familiesact.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 16, 2026 5:08 PM  
**To:** sbcob  
**Subject:** Final Public Comment from Suzanne Riordan, ED of Families ACT!

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Note to Clerk of the Board: Please send this corrected version of my previous Public Comment.

To: County Board of Supervisors

Re: Special Issues – Jail Housing Options – Budget Hearing 4/17/26

We don't need to expand the jail. We need to expand our Behavioral Wellness Residential Treatment options for clients across the continuum of care.

Twenty years ago a group of mothers came together to advocate for BEDS NOT CELLS—mental health and substance use treatment beds, not more jail cells. Since then, we have sought to help hundreds of families with a family mem struggling with dual diagnosis or complex mental health disorders.

Our community cannot afford to spend \$11.7M annually to fund 1.5 jail "pods" or housing units, when so many cycle through the jail without getting the help they need to recover.

The night before last I was awakened at 4 am haunted by the memories of those we have lost in recent years.

- In 2025, the friend of my son, a young man in his early 40's, was found hanging from a tree in our community.
- In 2017 a young Santa Barbara native in his 30's who had lost his father at a young age to suicide was struggling with dual diagnosis. He was sent to the Los Angeles Transition Center and came back, by his mother's account, a "totally broken person". His mother didn't know how to get him help. He later served a short sentenced in the Santa Barbara main jail. Shortly after he was released, he bludgeoned his mother to death with a hammer.
- A 35 -year client of Good Sam was "placed" at the Faulding Hotel where he died twice. Same scenario, one month apart. The first time he was revived at Cottage ICU but listed as John Doe at Cottage because no one bothered to get his name when he was transported seemingly lifeless from the Faulding to Cottage ER. The second time it was final.

- A 30- some year-old young man was tormented by voices telling him to do violent things. He presented himself five times at Cottage ER in one week and was turned away or sent to CSU (Crisis Stabilization Unit) who sent him back to the ER. He went home, took a kitchen knife and stabbed himself in the chest until he died in a pool of blood.

- In 2023, the 45-year son of my friend was found deceased in our jail one day after he was booked into the jail.

We at Families ACT! urge you to break the revolving door cycle and set up a group with stakeholder participation to come up with an affordable plan to provide needed residential treatment for behavioral health clients across the continuum of care.

Jail expansion is not the answer!

Suzanne

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**Stop the Revolving Door! Beds Not Cells!**

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