

August 18, 2024

Chair Lavagnino and Honorable Supervisors,

On Tuesday, August 20th, the county Board of Supervisors will receive a progress report on planning for implementation of Senate Bill (SB) 43, the "Grave Disability" bill, passed in 2023. This is the bill that would at last authorize treatment for persons so ill they cannot meet their need for medical treatment and/or personal safety regardless of whether their grave disability is caused by severe mental illness and/or a severe substance use disorder. We see them homeless on our streets every day, at high risk of not surviving. Sometimes, they don't survive. But, if they receive medically necessary psychiatric treatment and regain the capacity to make informed decisions, many can at last begin to take charge of their own recovery. Our county elected to delay implementation for up to 2 years for planning. This report is an excellent primer on Senate Bill 43. But, after 8 months, we as yet have only a plan to make a plan, but not as yet a proposed plan to begin addressing the most challenging aspects of SB 43 implementation.

The BW report notes one of the disadvantages of SB is "Constraints in LPS capacity = Longer wait times for placements and further shortening admissions." This is a recognition that our county has a shortage of acute PHF-type beds and longer-term subacute treatment beds. Even now, prior to SB 43 implementation, the wait time for a 5150 bed for someone who is uninsured or on Medi-Cal is still steadily growing, IF patients can secure one at all.

Under Prop 1, counties have the opportunity to apply for \$3.3 billion dollars for behavioral health infrastructure including construction or renovation of acute care hospitals such as our PHF, and longer-term subacute treatment facilities. This is an unequalled opportunity to build out our bed capacity, but only if we apply by December 13th. Yet we see no evidence in this report of a plan to make a county application. Is our county planning to apply, and if so, apply for what? We passed on a similar opportunity for beds in 2023, while other counties received multi-millions. Now, we have another chance for treatment beds needed to support Senate Bill 43 implementation. Please, let's not lose it again.

Lynne Gibbs, NAMI SBCO Public Policy Chair, and Families ACT! Advisor