

#4



Katherine Douglas *Public Comment - Group 1*

From: Cheryl Smith <csmith5376@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 11:59 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: Fwd: Public Comment, 04/01/2025 BOS, Dept. Item No. 4
Attachments: Public Comment BOS 2025 04 01, Dept Item 4.pdf

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.

Last email, I promise! New to Santa Barbara and new to the BOS Public Comment process and protocol. Thank you for your patience.

Please post the Comment to the [County of Santa Barbara - File #: 25-00266](#) . Unsure if the posting happens automatically on receipt of the comment or must be requested specifically.

Regards,
Cheryl Smith

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Cheryl Smith <csmith5376@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Mar 27, 2025 at 11:47 AM
Subject: Fwd: Public Comment, 04/01/2025 BOS, Dept. Item No. 4
To: Santa Barbara County Clerk <sbcob@co.santa-barbara.ca.us>

Corrected Subject Line from 2024 to 2025.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Cheryl Smith <csmith5376@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Mar 27, 2025 at 11:45 AM
Subject: Public Comment, 04/01/2024 BOS, Dept. Item No. 4
To: Santa Barbara County Clerk <sbcob@co.santa-barbara.ca.us>

See attachment for Public Comment on Dept. Item No. 4.

Regards,
Cheryl Smith

Public Comment for April 2025 SB County BOS Meeting

Chair Capps and Honorable Supervisors,

The Need for Secure, Long-term, Subacute Treatment Beds, Not Jail - A Personal Story

My son, David, diagnosed with schizophrenia in 2008, is currently in the South County jail. Homeless since 2013, he arrived in Santa Barbara in 2022 with a substance use disorder. He's accrued over 135 criminal court hearings, trapped in a cycle that harms him and the community, burdening the justice system.

David has anosognosia, a schizophrenia feature recognized by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). This biological condition prevents awareness of his illness, causing conflicts, anxiety, treatment avoidance, self-medication, and risks like homelessness or arrest.

David, recently admitted to Behavioral Wellness's Assisted Outpatient Treatment, faces limited engagement due to homelessness. Represented now by the Public Defender's Office, he initially chose self-representation, which proved detrimental. He declines diversion programs due to the impact of his illness on his cognitive and emotional functioning.

David's growing number of incarcerations since the passage of Prop 36 highlight the need for a more effective solution. A secure, long-term treatment facility is more suitable and cost-effective than continued incarceration. Seriously mentally ill and traumatized by a decade on the streets, he lacks insight to make sound decisions. Expecting him to perform otherwise is unrealistic.

A 2011 grand jury report compared jail costs to stabilizing services for homeless individuals with serious mental illness. It recommended the Santa Barbara County BOS analyze annual incarceration costs versus providing housing with supportive services. The report found incarceration costs are 25% higher than secure, long-term housing and support.

The April 18, 2023 Santa Barbara County BOS Budget Workshop featured public comments on Behavioral Wellness, with over a dozen personal stories shared. The situation for many of those individuals has not improved due to a lack of secure treatment beds.

Funding community services alone won't achieve comparable results. The County jail remains Santa Barbara's largest mental health facility due to inadequate resources. Insufficient secure, long-term subacute treatment capacity hinders breaking the cycle of homeless individuals with serious mental illness repeatedly entering the jail.

A secure, long-term subacute facility with evidence-based practices is the least restrictive environment to break the cycle of homelessness and incarceration. It's part of the continuum of care for treating serious mental illness, providing a safe, supportive setting for recovery and being more cost-effective than the current alternative.

Public Comment for April 2025 SB County BOS Meeting

We appreciate your service to the community in your elected positions. These roles require significant time and difficult decisions. Now is the time to address the urgent need for secure, long-term subacute beds for those who cannot advocate for themselves.

When California's Prop 1, Round 1 of BHCIP offered funding for secure, long-term treatment facilities, we were disappointed the county declined. We advocate for evidence-based facilities not only for the benefit of our loved ones but also for the benefit of the community at large. We choose treatment beds, not more jail beds.

Consensus remains elusive. What will it take in Santa Barbara?

Cheryl Smith

Member, NAMI SBCO Board and Stakeholder Workgroup on Housing and Treatment Beds

Katherine Douglas

From: Mark D'Evelyn <mpdevelyn@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 4:14 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Board of Supervisors discussion of possible expansion of jail system

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 fellow Santa Barbara citizens,

I am writing about your upcoming discussion of possible jail expansion at your next meeting. I am a member at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Santa Barbara and, as a Christian, I am concerned about finding the most appropriate path forward for low-level, non-violent offenders. Before moving forward with any decision on jail expansion, I urge the Board to first answer the following questions:

1. Why are we housing a large jail population whose primary needs are mental health or substance use treatment, not incarceration?
2. What do cost-benefit projections look like if we limit jail expansion and use savings to build robust community-based healthcare options and more low-income housing?
3. Why should the County delegate to the Sheriff primary responsibility to manage a community-based crisis in mental health by holding people in jail?
4. What is being done to ensure long-term retention of jail employees and prevention of future staffing shortages, without which jail care will continue to falter?
5. Do crime rates and population growth projections support an expansive and costly increase in jail beds?

I would ask, specifically, that the Board:

- Form a high level Task Force that includes community stakeholders, to make a detailed plan and schedule for reducing the jail population. This needs to occur before deciding on any jail addition.
- Create a plan to invest in community mental health and housing that will treat medical and mental health, address substance use addiction, and provide alternatives to keep people out of jail.
- Identify the need for, and resources required, to provide more low-cost and supportive housing for justice-involved individuals.

Sincerely yours,
Mark D'Evelyn