

April 14, 2019

Chair, Supervisor Steve Lavagnino  
Supervisor Joan Hartmann  
Supervisor Greg Hart  
Supervisor Das Williams  
Supervisor Peter Adam

**Subject: Budget Workshop Statement, April 15, 2019**

Honorable Supervisors,

We in NAMI, as part of the Alliance for Treatment, Care and Beds, know that our loved ones need access to treatment at the right time to support recovery and reduce the need for higher, more expensive levels of care.

We thank you and the DBW for extending funding for AOT through June 2020.

Expansion of AOT is one of the priorities identified by Stepping Up. Next year, we will need to adopt the AOT program with sustainable funding. The time has come to assess the pilot program. We request appointment of an AOT advisory committee, similar to what other counties have – to review our program, the outcomes, the costs of AOT, the cost savings, and the benefits.

Snapshots of our jail population these past two years tell us more than 50% have received mental health care from the Dept. of Behavioral Wellness, while only 4% are clients when arrested. It is significant that AOT provides ongoing treatment. Few of the new promising housing and diversion initiatives coming our way fund required treatment. Without treatment, people diverted from the jail get evicted from housing and fail in recovery. For this reason, AOT supports diversion and success in retaining housing.

This year, for the first time, cases have been referred to the AOT court, which proved a positive experience for everyone, including the clients. THIS is good news, because data shows, and we are seeing, the AOT court gets MORE people into treatment, at a lesser cost than criminal courts.

In the first 15 months of the AOT program alone, 61 persons were served in the community, persons who were typically high utilizers of county services. Our pilot program is proof of concept of what is possible -- more persons with serious illness getting the treatment they need; more leaving the jail partnered with treatment professionals who support their transition, ensuring the continuity of care they need.

Thank you,  
Lynne Gibbs, Chair, NAMI SSBCO Public Policy Committee