



February 23, 2020

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Honorable Supervisors,

On behalf of NAMI SSBCO, I write in support of Administrative Item 6 (February 25, 2020), recommending adoption by the Board of Supervisors of a resolution in support of a state waiver from the Institutions of Mental Disease (IMD) Exclusion, which prohibits use of federal Medicaid funding to cover services provided in facilities, including residential treatment facilities, with more than 16 beds, to individuals between ages 21 to under age 65 who suffer from severe mental illness.

Our organization has long supported effective treatment at all levels of the mental health continuum of care. At the most intensive level of care, we suffer a severe shortage of treatment beds within our county, in California, and nationwide, with the number of such beds in the U.S. having declined from a high of 550,000 to fewer than 38,000 now, with inpatient facilities in California continuing to close. Lack of such treatment beds is a significant contributor to homelessness and incarceration of the most vulnerably ill among us.

Waiver of the IMD exclusion would allow California to draw on federal funds to increase availability of psychiatric beds, freeing up State and County funds for other critical community mental health needs.

Thank you for your consideration of this important resolution.

Sincerely,

George Kaufmann, President
NAMI Southern Santa Barbara County