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December 12, 2016

Hon. Salud Carbajal
Hon. Janet Wolf
Hon. Doreen Farr
Hon. Peter Adam
Hon. Steve Lavagnino

Subject: Implement the Stepping Up Initiative

Dear Members of the Board:

As Santa Barbara residents who have been deeply affected by the lack of adequate treatment facilities and the consequent criminalization of people with mental health conditions, we come to you in support of the Stepping Up Initiative.

It is imperative that our County take steps to increase the number of acute hospital, IMD and residential treatment beds for people with mental health conditions and co-occurring disorders. For a decade now, Families ACT! has been asking for the County's commitment to addressing these gaps in our continuum of care for who those cycle through the revolving door of repeated incarcerations, ER visits and periods of homelessness. Just as significant funds were set aside annually for a new jail, significant funds need to be set aside to address the epidemic of mental illness and to provide compassionate and effective services to our County residents.

The Stepping Up Initiative calls for a new level of collaboration between the Public Defender's Office, Behavior Wellness, the Sheriff's Department and the County Supervisors, as well as the District Attorney and County Social Services as well as the State of California in addressing the long-standing inadequacy in our approach to complex mental health conditions.

We hope that the Stepping Up Initiative will highlight the long-standing need for making this step a higher priority for Santa Barbara County and serve to increase our resolve to bring all of our ingenuity, goodwill and all of the necessary resources together to create a continuum of care which serves to restore the wellbeing of all those who struggle with mental health conditions.

We thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rod Pearson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rod Pearson
President of the Board