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May 9, 2016

County of Santa Barbara  
Board of Supervisors  
105 East Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Honorable Supervisors:

The board and constituents of Families ACT! strongly urge Santa Barbara County to adopt an Assisted Outpatient Treatment pilot project at this time. We encourage you to dedicate the resources necessary to launch a pilot program to enable a team of case managers, clinicians, peers and, when necessary, a judge, to engage persons with mental health disorders who have been resistant to treatment in a team approach to their recovery.

Many of our loved ones are or have been in grave danger due to mental health conditions that have impaired their ability to seek help. When suffering in this way, a labor-intensive form of engagement has proven to help persuade them that it is safe to interface with a treatment team of peers and professionals who seek to help them find their balance. This kind of engagement requires a specially trained staff to patiently, respectfully and gently gain their trust. Sometimes it takes several meetings with a judge before someone begins their journey toward recovery.

We at Families ACT! believe that intensive residential treatment is an essential part of this journey. We have seen men and women, despite all the efforts of a loving family, who have spent countless nights wandering the streets or have been hospitalized over a dozen times in one year before being patiently brought back into relationship with a healthy and supportive community after a long journey which included time spent in a well-staffed residential setting. Each element in the continuum is important, and Santa Barbara's continuum of care is currently inadequate to serve the population of persons with the most severe mental health disorders in our county. Implementing Laura's Law is an important and necessary step in addressing critical gaps in this continuum.

We applaud the effort to propose its adoption in Santa Barbara County at this time. If the decision is made to begin to implement a pilot project at this time, our county will be eligible to apply this June for a SAMHSA grant, which could fund the pilot project. Assisted Outpatient Treatment has been implemented in other counties in California and elsewhere in the country. It has proven to be a compassionate, effective way to engage persons with mental health disorders who have been resistant to treatment. It is a cost-effective alternative to the cruel and costly "revolving door" of repeated incarceration, hospital visits and periods of homelessness which too many of our residents endure. It has proven to save lives, and, in the long run, to save money. We need it now!

Respectfully submitted,

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