

## Lenzi, Chelsea

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**From:** Toni Wellen <toni@silcom.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 16, 2017 9:03 PM  
**To:** sbcob  
**Subject:** RETAIN LAURA'S LAW: Laura's Law has forced county agencies in other counties to be more effective.

It is crucial for the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors to realize that if Santa Barbara abandons Laura's Law and with it many of the severely mentally ill, Santa Barbara could become one of the very few counties NOT implementing Laura's Law -- as more counties in California continue to adopt it. Why would this county abandon a program for the severely mentally ill that works and save's money?

In Nevada County, where Laura's Law was first implement providers and officials were talking about how Laura's Law has forced every agency in the county to be more effective.

I am and have been for years, supportive of adopting Laura's Law in Santa Barbara County. Like all of you, our primary concern is safety for individuals who are severely mentally ill and for the community.

The current approach, making the intensive services of the Assertive Community Treatment plan available to the most ill would show that the court component of Laura's Law is unnecessary. Unfortunately, time has shown that this approach has failed to live up to its expectations. This is consistent with studies showing that the court component of ACT is necessary for its success. Additionally the number of actual clients will be very small, and some of them will have housing while others will very likely get SSI, so the cost of housing should not be the primary reason for voting against implementation. Laura's Law is not a new service: it enhances and gives added strength to existing programs.

I am also speaking as a CA licensed family therapist, a profession whose caveat, like all medical and mental health professionals, is DO NO HARM. We need Laura's Law to stop the revolving door, where the chronically mentally ill bounce from the street to the jail to the hospital, never getting better. They may go off medication, become dangerous and just continue revolving through the court and mental hospital doors.

It is no longer viable to say that funding is the reason not to proceed. The well-being of severe mental people and the safety of the community must be the priority. It is incorrect to claim that the costs associated with ACT implementation cannot reduce or replace voluntary programs. As to predicting costs, there are no comparable counties, each California county is unique.

We need to stop incurring county costs for ER visits, law enforcement, jail and court time. Families generally support Laura's Law as it enables their loved one to live in the community and receive treatment. Once stabilized, a larger percentage of these folks elect to enter treatment voluntarily. We must give family members of adults with severely untreated mental illness a new strategy and that is to retain the Laura's Law pilot program and finally make it permanent.

*Toni Wellen*, Chair

