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Honorable County Supervisors,

As Santa Barbara County embarks on crafting its 2019-20 budget, it is gratifying to see that it recognizes the importance of diverting people with mental health conditions from the revolving door of homelessness, arrest, incarceration, and backlogged courts. We very much appreciate the efforts of Bernard Melekian and Terri Nisich toward this end, and the Special Issue summary entitled "Mental Health Diversion Efforts". It is our feeling that, if we are to make significant changes in the status quo, the County will need at least a half-time FTE in the County Executive Office dedicated to ensuring that diversion efforts are a priority among the relevant County departments.

Much progress has been made in the last year in Santa Barbara County's approach to serving this population, and efforts currently underway should yield results in the years to come.

Funding for the Sheriff's Behavioral Science's Unit and the creation of the Co-Response Team were giant steps forward, and we urge you to ensure ongoing funding for these programs. Along with Assisted Outpatient Treatment (aka Laura's Law), these are invaluable components of a continuum of care for people with mental health conditions.

Permanent supportive housing units for persons experiencing-- or at risk of--homelessness are currently being designed using No Place Like Home funding. Although a portion of MHSA funding was repurposed by the State of California to this end, we believe this happened in response to the tragic lack of supportive housing and residential treatment options at the County level.

Thanks to CLUE, Mary O'Gorman in Janet Wolf's office, Kim Shean in Probation, and County Homeless Assistance Program Manager, Kim Albers, twenty-eight transitional housing beds have been created using AB-109 Realignment funds for people from both North and South Santa Barbara County cycling through the criminal justice system and \$2.45M have been allocated for the creation of permanent supportive housing units. We hope to soon see the creation of a Mental Health Rehabilitation Center for criminal justice- involved persons with using the \$4M in AB-109 Realignment funds that have been set aside for this purpose. Meanwhile, Drug Medical beds are at long last expanding our inventory of residential treatment options for people with substance use disorders.

We support current efforts to relocate IMD patients to our County, as long as our inventory of beds at this level of inpatient care is not reduced by even one bed. Based on what our families are experiencing, it is our position that we in fact need an increase in the number of treatment beds at this level of care. In addition, the County desperately needs more acute psychiatric beds like the ones we have at the PHF. If sufficient beds were available for those needing these higher levels of care, chances are that the number of persons judged to be Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST) would decrease, and our loved ones would not be sitting in tremendous anguish in an isolation cell at our County Jail.

It will take all of us working together to be able to replace the current costly, unjust and simply untenable system, with a truly compassionate and effective continuum of care for the thousands of Santa Barbara residents with mental and behavioral health disorders to deserve to regain their wellbeing.

Thank you for your efforts to help bring this about.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Suzanne Riordan".

Suzanne Riordan, Executive Director