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March 16, 2015

Ms. Diana S. Dooley, Secretary
California Health and Human Services
1600 Ninth Street, Room 460
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Ms. Dooley:

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S
COMMENTS ON CALIFORNIA'S PROPOSED
SECTION 1115 MEDICAID WAIVER RENEWAL

This letter expresses my support for the inclusion of funding for housing, including but not limited to permanent supportive housing, and housing-based case management services in California's Section 1115 Medicaid Waiver Renewal proposal. As the head of one of the largest prosecutorial offices in the country, I understand the connectivity of the criminal justice system to the health care system regarding the mentally ill and the mentally ill with substance use disorders and/or medical conditions. We see many of the same people because they cycle in and out of both of our systems. What cannot be forgotten is that they also cycle in and out of housing systems as well. Housing is a stabilizer for most people because a home provides a sense of identity, safety and comfort. For the people that loop through our systems, however, housing has the opposite effect. These people experience extended periods of homelessness, shelter living, and transitional housing. The lack of a permanent home is a destabilizer that works against health stability, both medical and mental. Their destabilization, unfortunately, can lead to criminal behavior which draws them back into the criminal justice system.

I strongly believe that people with mental illness deserve comprehensive supportive services so that they may have the opportunity to stabilize. I am actively working with county elected officials, county department leaders and their staff, along with legal, health and mental health advocates, community-based organizations, and countywide law enforcement as well as the California Highway Patrol to cause the creation of an integrated, comprehensive and robust mental health diversion system in Los Angeles County. Permanent supportive housing is a cornerstone component to achieve this goal.

Los Angeles County is the largest county in the state and has 7 million more residents than the second largest county. Due to the lack of mental health hospitals, Los Angeles County Jail is also the largest mental health provider in the nation. On average, it has 2,733 mentally ill inmates a day who make up approximately 17 percent of its overall jail population. The inclusion of permanent supportive housing and housing-based case management services in the waiver would allow the County to devote more of its resources elsewhere. By freeing up resources, the County could increase its focus on the creation of affordable and project-based housing sites, development of integrated service delivery models, and service expansion to divert people who do not belong in the criminal justice system out of that system.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide input through the stakeholder process. If you have any questions, or are in need of additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

JACKIE LACEY
District Attorney

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