

July 29, 2014

Via Fax/Email

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I am writing to urge your support of Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' motion to commit \$20 million to fund coordinated and comprehensive diversion programs for community members with mental illnesses away from jail and into community based treatment.

The onset of a serious mental illness is a very traumatic and life changing event for the individual and the family. Mental illness is common in our communities: it affects one out of four adults annually. Individuals living with serious mental illnesses have been underserved long enough in our communities. As District Attorney Jackie Lacey shared in her report at the July 15 BOS meeting: "it is inhumane to punish persons with mental illness for being sick to solve their problems by themselves." We don't punish folks with chronic health challenges such as arthritis, asthma, cancer, or diabetes. Why do we continue to criminalize mental illness?

Also in her July 15 report to the Board, Ms. Lacey shared that according to Dr. Marvin Southard, Director of Department of Mental Health, individuals with mental illness released under AB 109 that are referred to and became engaged in treatment plans, the recidivism rate is 30% less for individuals with mental illness than that of those without mental illness. The current limited diversion programs have already support that diversion programs work. Let's expand on this success path.

I share NAMI LACC's strong support of the District Attorney's Criminal Justice Mental Health Task Force's efforts to decriminalize mental illness and urge your "Yes" support of Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' motion to commit resources to expand diversion programs for community members with mental illness away from jail into community based treatment.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

/s/ Nancy H. Eng

Nancy H. Eng

In Honor and Loving Memory of Jazmyne Ha Eng

NAMI San Gabriel Valley – Vice President, Family/Consumer Crisis Support

Rosemead Resident (1st District)