July 21, 2014

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration

500 West Temple

Los Angeles, CA 90012

executiveoffice@bos.lacounty.gov

Support for Motion by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas - Initial Steps to Support a Comprehensive Diversion Plan for Los Angeles County

Dear Los Angeles Board of Supervisors:

The board and staff of Volunteers of America – Greater Los Angeles were greatly encouraged by the presentation made to your Board by District Attorney Lacey on July 15, regarding the need to divert the mentally ill people away from the criminal justice system and toward appropriate community-based treatment. This is smart, effective thinking and the right thing to do.

We were encouraged still further when Supervisor Ridley-Thomas followed the DA’s presentation with a motion to set aside a minimum of $20 million to support first steps toward implementation of a diversion plan. Considering the vast amounts it costs to warehouse mentally ill people in jail cells where their condition often deteriorates, the $20 million represents an extremely sound investment in best practices. Further, this motion calls for addressing the housing and employment needs that when implemented, will keep many people from returning to jail.

We strongly urge your support for the Ridley-Thomas motion, and we commend the supervisor for making a powerful case for its passage. If I can provide any more information, please contact me at 213-251-7625.

Sincerely,

Orlando Ward

Executive Director of External Affairs

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