April 17, 2017

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Re: Budget Recommendations

Dear Supervisors,

CLUE SB, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, believes County budget allocations are moral choices impacting peoples' lives. Our faith communities advocate for jail alternatives for people with mental illness, those most vulnerable, living without appropriate housing and services, on streets and in our county jail.

Behavioral Wellness: Last August, the Behavior Wellness Department, with the help of the HEART housing team of which CLUE is a member, presented a facilities report with a chart clearly showing base line data, goals, priorities, and funding requests in terms of beds needed for each of 4 facilities types. The chart was intended for continued use each year to determine in budget discussions whether the goals were met, documenting the annual number of increased beds in the diverse levels of the continuum. In the proposed budget this year, we support the county following through on this plan, using an update of this chart for determining the funding for the projected number of increased beds in diverse facilities types, and documenting the sources of funding for each.
**Equitable Funding:** Before any cuts are made in this department, our county needs to validate, from an outside evaluator, that we are spending an appropriate portion of our county contribution to services for the Behavioral Wellness Department, compared to comparable counties. The last report by Tri West May 2013\(^2\), indicated SB county was far below, with the SB County contribution of $7,356 per 1,000 population compared to others, for example San Luis Obispo with $23,000 per 1,000.

**Jail, Stepping Up Initiative and Funding Alternative Facilities:** We recognize the leadership of the Board in approving the *Stepping Up Initiative*. We understand the difficulty of obtaining reliable base line jail data needed to measure outcomes for reducing the number of people in jail with mental illness. Without this data we cannot know the number of beds and types of facilities needed to provide alternatives. The Stepping Up Initiative Team, of which CLUE SB is a member, is working on securing that data system. We understand Sheriff Brown expects to produce reliable base line data by fall 2017. With approximately 150 in jail daily with identified mental illness, a significant number of increased beds in diverse alternative housing and treatment facilities will be needed to implement this initiative. Most importantly, in the budget process this year, the county needs to clarify **who is responsible for the funding and housing plan** targeting this exiting population.

**The purpose of this letter** is to encourage you to take a step back, and decide each budget allocation for a department or from general funds only after a review of a clear statement of department or county long-range goals and priorities. Considering any one program in isolation is not a fair and productive practice. We urge you to carefully weigh the reliable base line data provided, along with additional data demonstrating measurable outcomes last year relative to the priority goals, and any milestones that have been reached toward those goals.

We appreciate all your time and the in depth work required in the discernment of budget allocations. CLUE SB, in solidarity with our faith communities, calls on you to accept moral responsibility to take concrete actions to continue reducing the suffering of those with mental illness caused by the current unjust system.

Respectfully,
Maureen Earls, President, CLUE SB
Alena Simon, CLUE SB Board, Criminal Justice System Reform Work Group
Lane Clark, CLUE SB Board, Criminal Justice System Reform Work Group

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\(^1\) [Board Agenda Letter August 23, 2016](#)
\(^2\) [Comprehensive Analysis of Assessment of Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services, Tri West, May 2013, p.76](#)