



Clergy & Laity United  
for Economic Justice

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To: Stepping Up Members

From: Maureen Earls, CLUE SB President

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We know there are an estimated 150 people with mental illness daily in our county jail, most of whom belong in alternative supported housing. This compels us to continue to work together to eliminate their suffering and the added expense for an inappropriate and harmful living environment.

Since our Stepping Up Meeting, I talked with John Polansky from the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Barbara. After conversations with Director Alice and Chief Tanja, he concluded **his proposed housing option shared by me at our last Stepping Up meeting could not work**. 20 beds for frequent users of jail and mental health services in the planned 80 beds in two Santa Maria facilities could not be targeted for our population. The plan was to use a \$2m investment from the Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) realignment and jail reform One Time Fund budget for the units.

He realized there is a **funding regulation** for the MHSA application regarding a 50% limit on MHSA-eligible mental health service residents. 35 of the 80 beds were already promised to Behavioral Wellness for their MHSA funding contribution. To add 20 more under CCP, with mental illness and frequent users of jail as a condition, would put the housing development at risk for compliance. However, some of our population may be served in the 35 units to be allocated by Behavioral Wellness through MHSA. The **good news** is that John did meet with Director Alice and Chief Tanja, and established a relationship for future planning for housing our targeted population. Chief Tanja had mentioned at our faith community meeting that she wanted more background on housing options and John is a successful provider of this kind of housing, as modeled in Pescadero Lofts. In addition, fortunately for the county, **John has found an alternative source** for the needed funds for the Santa Maria project to move forward, from a HUD allocation.

**Dr. Austin's evaluation report last year of the SB CCP budget has established housing for mental illness as an appropriate and recommended option for CCP funding.** As we look to the next 5 years of \$60 million in CCP funding, and the One Time Only Budget not yet allocated, CLUESB advocates for a serious discernment of what percentage of this allocation we can invest in supportive housing. We now know the goal of our Stepping Up Initiative can be achieved. We can target housing for this population and John has agreed to work with us to achieve that goal.