



Dear Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors,

We are the Presidents of three unions representing Los Angeles County health care/mental health workers: AFSCME Local 2712 (Association of Psychiatric Social Workers of Los Angeles County), AFSCME Local 3511 (Supervising Psychiatric Social Workers), and the Union of American Physicians and Dentists, AFSCME Local 206 (Physicians, Psychiatrists, and Dentists). On behalf of the workers we represent, we want to express our support for bringing the Department of Health Services (DHS), Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Sheriff's Department medical services under a single agency.

When we talk to the workers we represent, we have found a high level of support for integrated services. Having an overarching structure that unites these departments will allow County workers to better coordinate care for the people we serve. Our members support the notion of a single medical record that can be viewed by all providers. We want an accessible, streamlined, and coordinated system for making appointments, so we can help people connect with the spectrum of care they need in a timely fashion. We want the tools to provide the best possible service, and we believe that creating one agency for health/mental health care will make significant progress in that direction.

Providing comprehensive health care at a single point of entry is not only better for County workers and the people we care for, it is cost-effective. Right now, every time a patient moves from one department to another, extra costs are incurred. Additionally, many fall through the cracks during this process, frequently resulting in a more acute phase of illness requiring a higher level of care. When inefficiencies are eliminated, the savings can be used for more important things, like improving patient services and keeping worker pay and benefits competitive.

Lastly, we would like to express our belief that Dr. Mitchell Katz is the best person to run the new health care agency. As head of DHS, Dr. Katz has a history of dealing fairly with workers and making intelligent improvements to the department. We think the whole system would benefit if he is given a chance to lead it.

However, regardless of who is appointed to run it, our support of the Agency Model is contingent upon the inclusion, from the beginning, of a robust Joint Labor-Management process, including the leadership of our three unions. This would help ensure that functional processes are put in place that would outlast the tenure of a competent leader such as Dr. Katz.

Signed,

Stuart A. Bussey, M.D., J.D.
President, UAPD

Theodorah McKenna, MSW, LCSW
President, AFSCME Local 2712

Marina Martin, MSW, LCSW
President, AFSCME Local 3511