



HOUSING WORKS

creating housing options

April 13, 2015

Office of Health Integration
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 W. Temple Street, Room 726
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: COMMENTS REGARDING THE CREATION OF ONE HEALTH AGENCY

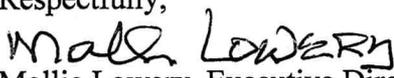
Housing Works is a non-profit, 501c3 agency committed to moving homeless people off the street and into permanent supportive housing. We use housing first strategies- providing the housing without barriers such as requiring participation in mental health or addiction treatment. The housing first strategy linked to permanent supportive housing is a best practice- proven to successfully house and retain housing for chronically homeless persons.

In Los Angeles County, there is *extremely limited access* to mental health or substance abuse treatment for homeless persons. This perpetuates and exacerbates homelessness in our County. The greatest barriers to successfully *retaining* housing for our prior homeless tenants is the *lack of access to both mental health treatment and substance abuse treatment*. When our tenants are ready and requesting treatment, it can take several months before they have access. Once they become non-compliant with mental health services, largely because of inadequate or inconsistent treatment, their case is terminated- obviously when they most need it.

We believe that merging the three County agencies under the right visionary *leadership* can eliminate this critical barrier to treatment... and often, housing. The County Department of Health Services has proven its commitment to housing their homeless patients *as a health and recovery intervention using healthcare dollars to do it*. Homeless individuals and families who frequent the County hospitals are now given the real possibility of not only clear access to health care, but direct access to permanent supportive housing.

We have the solution. We need accessible, responsive behavioral health treatment closely aligned with medical treatment and the ability to house people as a foundation for their recovery and ability to thrive. Coordinated, cohesive, no wrong door to both treatment and housing is a must. Merging the three County agencies is a way to do it.

Respectfully,


Mollie Lowery, Executive Director