

**From:** [Kathryn Hedges](#)  
**To:** [BoardOperations](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Agenda Item 16  
**Date:** Monday, February 26, 2024 7:30:10 PM

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Dear County Supervisors:

I am a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice at Sacred Heart and a registered voter in District 2. I join with the Community Living Coalition and Survivors of the Streets at Sacred Heart in urging you to reform unsafe living conditions for Behavioral Health Clients at independent living shared housing contracted by County Behavioral Health agencies.

We ask that the County initiate and support implementation of a Community Task Force as outlined in the proposal submitted by the Community Living Coalition to:

1. Review current standards for housing Behavioral Health Clients in unlicensed independent living shared housing and make recommendations;
2. Develop a Registry of all independent living shared housing; and
3. Require all behavioral health providers to send their lists of independent livings that house behavioral health clients to one central source.

The goal of this Community Task Force is to ensure that unlicensed shared housing, called independent livings, that providers use to house behavioral health clients meets an established degree of quality and safety allowing for clients' continued wellness and recovery and protecting clients who live in those homes from conditions that jeopardize their health and welfare.

The goal of the Registry is to enable city and county government and advocates to protect tenants living in those homes by providing targeted outreach and allowing for rights advocacy to home operators and tenants, blight reduction, and improved habitability to sustain long-term housing stability.

Although some operators of independent livings take their responsibility to residents seriously and operate this housing in a safe and healthy manner, many do not. They are pocketing the funds to house Behavioral Health Clients but not maintaining their buildings in basic habitable condition, providing proper food, or protecting residents from harm. Some independent livings are indistinguishable from "trap houses" due to rampant drug sales on the premises--how are clients supposed to avoid falling back into substance dependence?

Currently, there is no oversight to prevent these abuses. Conditions are often so intolerable that residents would rather return to the streets.

The County must take responsibility for reforming the independent livings where their staff and contractors pay to place their vulnerable Behavioral Health Clients. Please take the first steps by establishing this Community Task Force.

Kind regards,

Kathryn Hedges

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