

From: [Jen Myhre](#)
To: [BoardOperations](#)
Cc: [Ellenberg, Supervisor](#); [Chavez, Cindy](#); [Supervisor.Lee](#); [Supervisor Simitian](#); [District1](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Items 16 and 32
Date: Monday, February 26, 2024 1:44:01 PM
Attachments: [suri logo full color\(1\).png](#)
[SURJ letter of support for SOS and CLC petition.pdf](#)

Please see attached.

To: The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors

Re: Items 16 and 32

From: Showing Up for Racial Justice at Sacred Heart Community Serve

Date: February 26 2024

Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) at Sacred Heart Community Service is writing to support the petition by Survivors of the Street and the Community Living Coalition submitted in response to the item to “Approve Request for Appropriation Modification No. 150 -\$5,345,659 increasing estimated revenue and expenditure appropriations in the Behavioral Health Services Department budget, relating to Behavioral Health Bridge Housing.” Their petition asks the county to center the voices of those who have lived in this type of housing. For example, the memorandum from Dr. Terao and Mr. Le does not include details for the “habitability improvements fund” it mentions and people with lived experience want to understand the specifics about this fund and the planning process for bridge housing, and be active participants in that process. As you discuss Item 16, move forward on this petition to integrate affected community members in the planning process for board and care housing.

Their petition asks the county to implement a community task force and develop a registry of independent living shared housing. SURJ's core principle is to follow the lead of our partners who are directly affected by a problem. At Sacred Heart Community Service we believe that those closest to the pain have the best solutions. For these reasons, we support the key principle of the SOS and CLC petition: that community members who know what it's like to live in board and care homes should be centered in a taskforce that will review standards for housing behavioral health clients in unlicensed independent living and make recommendations based on their review.

Santa Clara County is in the midst of a mental health crisis and has devoted considerable energy to work to address this crisis. However, many of our neighbors are still falling through the cracks. There is not enough licensed housing (otherwise known as Board and Care) to support those who have a mental illness. Often county resources and social workers resort to unregulated housing (otherwise known as Independent Living or Room and Board). People who have experienced living in these housing units face issues of overcrowding, non-nutritious meals, plumbing and heating issues, and a lack of staff

support who are trained to deal with the complexities of people with mental illness. Instead of being a place to encourage recovery, people have reported their conditions getting worse. It is inexcusable that county-contracted mental health providers need to resort to placing people with mental illness in homes that do not reflect the dignity and respect that human beings deserve. Providing stable housing can be a key contributor to someone's healing and recovery and is a better investment of county funds than a new jail.

A community task force will be able to identify how the county can both increase the capacity of housing for people with mental disabilities and as well as ways to improve the quality so the environment is conducive to the process of getting well. They have already developed detailed recommendations in their *Community Task Force to Review Current Standards for Housing Behavioral Health Clients in Unlicensed Independent Livings and Make Recommendations* document. And the county should work with that task force to develop a registry of all independent living shared housing so that quality and safety standards can be monitored. We urge the county to prioritize the formation of a task force that will help address capacity and quality issues that exist within the Continuum of Care in Santa Clara County.

Jen Myhre, on behalf of the members of Showing Up for Racial Justice at Sacred Heart Community Service



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Jen Myhre (she/they)
Senior Organizer, Showing Up for Racial Justice
<https://www.surjatsacredheart.org/>



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