



MAYOR REX RICHARDSON

June 16, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, 9th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: City of Long Beach's Priorities Regarding the Mental Health Services Act

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the City of Long Beach, thank you for your leadership and commitment to modernizing the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). Mental health is fundamental to overall health and well-being. It is an essential component of any thriving city, and it is the right time to explore how mental health systems may be improved.

As you know, the MHSA has not been significantly reformed in the 20 years since voters passed it. Current MHSA rules do not provide resources to local city health jurisdictions despite the overwhelming need for mental health services for large cities like Long Beach. Currently, the administration and location of mental health and substance use services falls within Los Angeles County's jurisdiction, creating disconnected systems of care for those needing mental health services. The City of Long Beach is committed to working with you to revise the MHSA to allow for the provision of direct resources to local city health jurisdictions and large cities for mental health services.

The 2023 point in time count revealed an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness with serious mental health conditions. Of the 3,447 people experiencing homelessness in Long Beach, 31.8 percent reported being affected by substance misuse and 34.7 percent by a serious mental illness. Between 2018 and 2020, about 15.8 percent of Long Beach residents 18 years and over reported not having good mental health for 14 days or more. The mental health system serving Long Beach is a series of disconnected systems that are not coordinated, making access to relevant services at the appropriate time very difficult. Furthermore, Los Angeles County has very few mental health residential beds, step-down beds, and recuperative care services available in our city. We have consistently asked the County to increase resources and access to mental health resources locally, but we have not seen significant movement in this direction.

Given the lack of local mental health resources, in 2021 the City began the process to research options to expand localization of mental health resources. On [November 9, 2021](#), the Long Beach City Council directed the City Manager to work with the Long Beach Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) and local mental health providers to explore the feasibility of establishing a more robust infrastructure for mental health services in collaboration with the County of Los Angeles. In response to this directive, the DHHS began convening a Mental Health Advisory Group in May of 2022, and hosted meetings to obtain input regarding the strengths and challenges of the mental health system, focusing on the following populations of concern: children and youth in schools, adults living with depression and anxiety, people experiencing homelessness, and those in crisis.

Between May 2022 and February 2023, the DHHS convened and facilitated a planning process intended to develop recommendations for a more robust mental health system in Long Beach. One recommendation includes identifying and supporting legislation to provide funding for the coordination of local mental health system efforts. Modernizing the MHSA presents a unique opportunity to re-envision how the state funds California's behavioral health system. In your effort to modernize the MHSA, we ask that you include a pathway for cities with their own health departments, including Long Beach, Berkeley, and Pasadena, to access direct allocations of future MHSA funding.

Thank you for your leadership on this important matter. We look forward to strengthening our partnership to identify solutions to mental health treatment in the region. If you have any questions, please contact Tyler Bonanno-Curley, Acting Deputy City Manager, at (562) 570-5715 or Tyler.Curley@longbeach.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rex Richardson", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mayor Rex Richardson
City of Long Beach

cc: The Honorable Lena Gonzalez, State Senate, 33rd District
The Honorable Mike Gipson, State Assembly, 65th District
The Honorable Josh Lowenthal, State Assembly, 69th District
Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, California Health & Human Services Agency