

January 5, 2024

Gregory Garrett

[REDACTED]
Rescue, CA 95672

The Honorable Gavin Newsom,
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

I am writing to ask for your help with a proposed project funded through the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP), which is governed by the Department of Health Services (DHCS) WIC 5960-5960.5. As you know, BHCIP, in part, streamlines approval for mental health and substance abuse treatment facilities by providing a path around local zoning and discretionary requirements. I understand this approach was established to limit unfounded “not in my back yard” obstacles that treatment organizations may face during the ordinary approval process. While this approach shows promise, it relies on our trust that these organizations and the DHCS, through proper grant and licensing qualifications will make responsible decisions. This trust is especially important, given the checks that we ordinarily rely upon will not be in place.

I would like to draw your attention to a proposed facility where this trust was broken, and responsible decisions were not made. Specifically, the DHCS approved proposal by HomeCA partnered with Native Directions Inc. for Rescue, El Dorado County (Grant B4-43-New Tribal Project). The three primary areas of concern are:

- 1) **Unsafe and Overburdened Roads:** HomeCA, has selected an unsafe location off Deer Valley Road, in Rescue, to build a 30-bed facility totaling more than 10,000 square feet. Without appropriate road improvements, all involved, HomeCa, Native Directions, Inc. and the State of California, will be showing a disregard for safety and will be knowingly and/or negligently putting lives at risk. While I understand some streamlining is necessary, safety should not be one of them. Were the DHCS’s BHCIP grant qualification criteria actually designed to ignore road safety?

This is a rural area, and the proposed facilities would be located on two noncontiguous parcels bordered by Deer Valley Road and two private roads. This location will create unsafe conditions on Deer Valley Road, which is a winding road that funnels to a narrow and one-lane bridge from each direction. The private roads are narrow dirt and gravel and are intended to provide ingress and egress to single family homes only. A development like this would ordinarily require significant road safety improvements. These safety improvements, at a minimum, would include the widening of Deer Valley Road and the replacement of the two bridges. Without safety improvements, these roads (intended for single family residences) cannot safely serve a 30-bed facility. This disregard for safety puts not only our community at risk, but also the facility residents, staff, social services staff, tribal counselors, and any visitors. There are a multitude of properties available that don’t present these safety risks and liabilities. Why was this location chosen?

- 2) **Overburden Immediate Neighbors:** This proposed 30-bed facility (reported as youth perinatal and adult substance abuse) is planned for two non-contiguous parcels. These vacant parcels are separated by only one home recently built by retirees as their forever home. Their home was under construction when

HomeCA purchased the neighboring parcels. This couple will be completely enveloped by the activities of the facility day and night. Noise, lights, dust and traffic between the facilities on the private road that runs across their property directly behind their house. It'll be as if they are a part of the overall operation of this treatment complex. Further, they will suffer significant loss of property value because they were deliberately sandwiched in these treatment facilities. What are HomeCA's intentions? Are they planning to force a sale to the facility owners at a discount?

- 3) As mentioned, this is a tribal grant (B4-243-New Tribal Project). Public outreach explained that this grant was to be used to serve tribal members in the San Joaquin Delta area. The concept of this proposal that requires Native Americans to relocate outside of their local community for help and continued care is disturbing and something to which I am particularly sensitive. My family was relocated twice due to government intervention. First from Georgia to Oklahoma (Indian Removal Act) and then again in the 1930's to California when their family farms were taken by greedy oil companies with the government's blessing. Relocating tribal members from the San Joaquin Delta area to this area, or to and from any distant part of California, appears to be an effort to move them out of their local communities. I do not see tribal members as a slice of a monolith, they are free individuals. Care contingent on forced relocation implies they are not free and must again conform to a different way. These services must be near them and their families! Amend the grant to ensure treatment and continued care is provided in a safe manner within or near their local community. Wasn't this a goal of the BHCIP?

I believe your intent in establishing the BCHIP was to expand mental health and substance abuse care by streamlining the approvals for facilities in appropriate locations within the local communities they are to serve. I do not believe your intent was to provide money and approve any facility no matter what the consequences of an ill-suited location and to relocate people seeking help.

I request that you immediately suspend the grant to HomeCA partnered with Native Directions Inc., so that they may find a responsible, safe and suitable location. Also, that they improve their operational concepts with perhaps a location closer the San Joaquin Delta area where they initially said their residents and families would be from. I also request that you look into the grant and licensing qualification criteria with DHCS. Because the law provides a bypass of local requirements and does not require typical regulatory refinements, these qualification criteria must include instruction that treatment organizations are to select responsible locations and the organization's plans will benefit the local communities. There is no reason, with proper instruction, that HomeCA cannot find a location that utilizes safe public roads and does not place such an unfair burden on their immediate neighbors. These criteria must also be easily available to the public.

Thank you for your time and your efforts to help people and find solutions to the homeless crisis in California. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Gregory Garrett

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CC: next page

CC:

Marie Alvarado-Gil
CA State Senator,
4th District.

Joe Patterson
CA State Assemblyman,
5th District.

Dr. Ghaly,
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