

April 29, 2014

Honorable Ron Mikulaco
Honorable Ray Nutting
Honorable Brian Veerkamp
Honorable Ron Briggs
Honorable Norma Santiago

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
330 Fair Lane
Placerville, CA 95667

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors,

I'm a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) with approximately 20 years experience in mental health crisis services and in-patient hospitals. For the past 14 years, I've been employed by the County . My current assignment is Program Coordinator at the PHF. I will be retiring before the end of year.

I understand it is premature to address the costs and benefits, both financial and other, of the County maintaining the PHF vs. a contractor operating the PHF. Thus, I'd like to address the issue before the Board of approving RFP's to merely explore the issue. Despite our Director's generous and extensive explanation of the issue in 2 meetings at the PHF, I remain with a few questions and concerns.

I believe the basic hypothesis that increased staffing on the unit will result in increased safety is unproven and possibly erroneous. We exceed State minimum staffing requirements. It is difficult for me to believe that State minimum requirements make PHF's inherently dangerous. Personally, I believe generally we have adequate staffing at the PHF. Our staffing difficulty is in having available staff to address regular employee planned and unplanned time off and available staff for those occasions when increased staffing is necessary due to acuity or other immediate needs. This speaks to the difficulties of the Extra Help positions. Frequently, I believe our coverage numbers are effective but

the staff members are taxed by all the overtime necessary due to the unavailability of extra help, part-time or per diem staff.

I believe the issue of Unusual Occurrences requires some elaboration and discussion. I believe the Director has shared that there is a wide difference in interpretation of what's an Unusual Occurrence from County to County. The data before you presented absent of deeper analysis does not illuminate the issue of risk to safety. Additionally, Unusual Occurrences include events not directly related to the issue before the Board. Power outages, the loss of hot water, the loss of refrigeration, severe acts of nature, etc. all require reports.

Paradoxically, **the appropriate decision by the Placerville Police Department to cease responding to non-police issues at the PHF enhanced safety and treatment at the PHF.** In their absence, staff was compelled to become more engaged and proactive on the unit, better equipped and trained to handle difficult situations and to examine our use of seclusion and restraint. Our most recent report on seclusion and restraint is exemplary as measured by actual incidents.

I don't know how to interpret our Worker's Compensation claims and costs. I have suffered 2 serious injuries and I believe neither of them were a function of insufficient staffing. One was a result of an unpredictable and random act of violence. I believe many or most of our injuries are of this nature. The other occurred immediately after the police decision and did occur attempting to place someone in seclusion. I believe we had sufficient numbers but insufficient experience and training. I believe this was the first occasion where we addressed a situation where in the past the police would have been called. Merely as an interesting (to me) anecdote, the first serious injury I ever experienced in a psychiatric facility occurred after a code was called due to an assaultive patient and we had approximately 20 staff to intervene.

Finally, regardless of the intent of this issue to merely explore and the extensive explanations to staff, staff is unnerved and fearful for their jobs. Most agree that this response is natural and human nature. Individuals are worried about their livelihood and their careers. I believe the approval of this item will have the unintended effect of significantly exacerbating staffing difficulties. In the weeks or months

while RFP's are solicited and reviewed, staff will leave the PHF for what they believe to be more secure employment.

My humble request to the Board is to postpone or decline this item to afford a greater opportunity to securely identify what the challenges are and what may be appropriate solutions.

I thank you for your time.

Robert J Bloom LCSW