



August 3, 2012

Vanessa Baird, Deputy Director
Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services
Department of Healthcare Services
P.O. Box 997413, MS 4000
Sacramento, CA 95899-7413

Re: California Department of Health Care Services Business Plan for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services Project Description

Dear Ms. Baird,

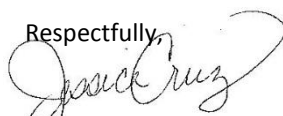
Congratulations on your appointment as Deputy Director for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services. NAMI California looks forward to working together with you to keep key policy issues of mental health and substance use at the forefront of our state's priorities and to make much needed progress in continued implementation of the Mental Health Services Act, health care integration, and all related areas of wellness. We have been impressed with the way you have interacted with the public during this time of transition and we are hopeful that you will be continuing to prioritize our concerns.

We are in receipt of the above document and are glad to see that DHCS is moving forward to develop a business plan for the multiple concerns that face mental health stakeholders throughout the state. As the grassroots representative of over 19,000 individuals with mental illness and family members from 67 affiliates statewide, NAMI California comes to the table with firsthand knowledge of the challenges faced by individuals with serious mental health conditions and their families. In turn, our members also come with hard won stories of success. As people with so much at stake in the policies of our state, we are thankful that statute also reflects the importance of our representation. We look very forward to the stakeholder process you will be holding to develop the above named business plan. However, at the same time, we must ask that meaningful consideration of consumer and family experiences and expertise is included more equitably in the process. I refer, in particular, to Page 2, No 3:

"In the final phase of the project CiMH and ADPI will develop workgroups composed of DHCS, DADP, County, and other relevant staff for each priority policy or fiscal issue. The workgroups will develop recommendations on each issue."

While workgroups are excellent venues for the development of work on policy and fiscal issues, it is unfortunate that only government partners and staff are included above. There is no mention that community stakeholders – particularly organizations representing consumers and family members – will serve on these workgroups. We respectfully request a change in that part of the plan before the process moves forward.

Respectfully,


Jessica Cruz, MPA/hs
Executive Director

cc: Sandra Naylor Goodwin, Ph.D., MSW, Executive Director, CiMH
NAMI California Board of Directors
Kathleen Derby, Director of Advocacy, NAMI California
Bettie Reinhardt, Policy Consultant, NAMI CAN Coordinator

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