



REMHDCO

Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition

November 15, 2017

Commissioner Bill Brown
Commissioner Tina Wooten
Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission
1325 J Street, Suite 1700
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Criminal Justice and Mental Health Report – “Together We Can”
Third Draft for Commission Meeting of November 16, 2017

Dear Commissioner Brown and Wooten,

The Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO) has read the third draft of the report, “Together We Can” that will be discussed and voted on at this Thursday’s Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) meeting. We want to commend you and the MHSOAC staff for the hard work and thoroughness that went into developing this report on such a complex and serious issue.

REMHDCO is very appreciative of the changes made to the report, we assume in response to testimony at the last MHSOAC meeting in Los Angeles on October 26, 2017, and to our letter dated October 5th, 2017, regarding the second draft of the report. We will support the Commission if it moves to adopt the third version of the report.

Again, we are taking into consideration your comments about the report being aimed more at high level decision-makers in the criminal justice system, as well as county and state administrators, rather than the mental health community. We are trusting your judgement in producing the report in a tone and perspective that may not reflect our preferences, but that will be effective toward attitude and

**7759 El Rito Way, Sacramento, CA 95831
(916) 705-5018 shiramoto@remhdco.org**

policy changes in the criminal justice and mental health systems that we can all support.

We respectfully request, however, for either an addendum to the report or an adjunct report that includes more of the testimony and perspectives of the consumers, family members, providers, and community members who were present at the public hearings (especially the one in San Francisco) and the focus groups. We believe the voices of those from the African American, Latino, Native American communities, and the LGBTQ community, should be highlighted as these communities are underserved or inappropriately served by both the criminal justice and mental health systems, as well as other systems.

We believe that the public hearings and focus groups conducted for this project produced information that provides the Commission to address the timely issues of how race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation and gender identity, are often the most powerful factors in whether people receive treatment, what type of treatment they receive, whether they are incarcerated, and so on.

Moreover, when seeking input from community stakeholders - especially when we are asking is for them to reveal sensitive, painful, and often traumatic experiences - it is only fair that they see what they related reflected some way in the report. Communities of color have often experienced researchers and others coming into their communities, convincing them to give their time and to relate very personal information, only to never see these researchers or the product they contributed to (reports, studies, etc.) ever again.

An addendum or adjunct report would be greatly appreciated by the mental health community at large, as well as underserved communities, and could be something to facilitate reducing mental health disparities. We ask the MHSOAC to strongly consider our request. REMHDCO stands willing to assist in the production of this addendum or adjunct report in any way we can.

Sincerely,



Beatrice Lee
President

cc: All MHSOAC Commissioners
Toby Ewing, Executive Director of the MHSOAC