



June 7, 2022

The Honorable Tom Umberg
Member of the State Senate
1021 O Street #6370
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
Member of the State Senate
1021 O Street #8530
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 1338 (Umberg/Eggman): Support

Dear Senators Umberg and Eggman:

We are writing in support of your legislation, SB 1338, which would enact the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act, an important measure to provide California's civil courts with a new process for earlier action, support, and accountability to protect and care for some of our State's most vulnerable residents.

The creation of CARE Courts by SB 1338 represents a thoughtful approach to addressing the behavioral health crisis we are witnessing on our streets and getting people connected with the care they need earlier. It appropriately recognizes the continuum of care that this small but highly visible

segment of the population with significant mental health disorders deserve. As with local agencies throughout the State, San Diego's communities are facing a daunting homelessness crisis. However, the unsheltered population is as diverse as the general population, all who come to their housing situation with different backgrounds, upbringings, and traumas. It is imperative that we provide multi-faceted solutions to help the myriad situations our fellow Californians face. Some unsheltered individuals recently lost a job and need quick and focused assistance; some have serious mental health and substance use disorder issues that have developed over many years resulting in an inability to care for themselves.

The County of San Diego, in partnership with the region's cities, has been working to modernize our region's approach to behavioral health services, investing in mobile crisis response teams, and new facilities like crisis stabilization units and community harm reduction shelters, specifically for people struggling with addiction and co-occurring mental illness. In addition to these investments, we need the corresponding policy changes that must occur at the state level.

CARE Court will provide a new and focused civil justice alternative to those struggling with schizophrenia spectrum or psychotic disorders and who lack medical decision-making capacity. The CARE plan envisioned by SB 1338 provides numerous safeguards to ensure personal civil liberties are respected and protected. Distinct from the Lanterman Petris Short (LPS) conservatorship process, this bill requires the County Health and Human Services Agency to establish a cadre of "supporters" who have the obligation to advocate for each person enrolled or potentially enrolled in CARE Court. Further, CARE Court enrollment is time-limited and is intended to last only one year, although it can be extended for one additional year. During the enrolled period, CARE plans can provide the needed time and intensive care to assist those more seriously ill on our streets.

To ensure effective implementation, San Diego local governments will need to make new investments in scaling up a new system of care, as well as infrastructure to accommodate the anticipated increase in demand for services. The region is already experiencing a behavioral health workforce shortage due to high housing costs, stagnant wages, licensing barriers, and impacted caseloads. Having enough trained and qualified professionals to provide care and support to participants will be essential to the success of CARE Court.

In addition, the San Diego region is committed to working to expand available housing for participants in the treatment program. All manner of housing - including shelter, transitional, and affordable - must be acquired to stabilize participants and move them off the streets. The San Diego region is making significant strides to meet the workforce and infrastructure implementation needs of CARE Court, but more is needed. We collectively support new state investments to help significantly close these gaps.

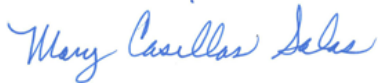
We must modernize our state's behavioral health system to help people access care earlier, before crisis. We are pleased that this bill, and the other pending budgetary and legislative proposals, promise to do just that.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

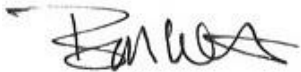
Sincerely,



NATHAN FLETCHER
Chair, Board of Supervisors
County of San Diego



MARY CASILLAS SALAS
Mayor
City of Chula Vista



BILL WELLS
Mayor
City of El Cajon



SERGE DEDINA
Mayor
City of Imperial Beach



ALEJANDRA SOTELO-SOLIS
Mayor
City of National City



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