

Dear Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors,

As community leaders, we recognize that Santa Clara County has a mental health crisis. Of the homeless in our County, 42% reported mental illness, yet current efforts in the County to address this issue are tragically lacking.

Homeless individuals who lack capacity because of a severe mental illness to provide for their basic human needs cannot continue to fall victim to uninhabitable living conditions, drug and alcohol abuse, and risks of harm to themselves or [others on the streets](#). It is imperative that we consider the benefits of Laura's Law and strengthened conservatorship in Santa Clara County.

Laura's Law passed the California State Legislature in 2002, aiming to remedy the issues posed by mentally ill individuals occupying the streets: introducing court-mandated assisted outpatient treatment for those who are likely to benefit from it. To date, 20 counties in California have done just this, including the Bay Area Counties of San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, and San Francisco-- achieving a high degree of success. Specifically, In San Francisco County, 91% of patients saw reduced hospitalization, with 88% reducing their time spent incarcerated and 74% reducing their use of Psychiatric Emergency Services. Not only that, but in Nevada County, where Laura's Law was first implemented, the law has saved between \$1.82 to \$2.52 per \$1.00 invested in the program. Laura's Law is saving lives, saving money, and giving people the help that they need.

Furthermore, in pursuit of the most comprehensive care for suffering residents, conservatorship for substance abusers and the mentally ill also must be re-examined. While Santa Clara County's LPS Conservatorship was an important first step starting in 1972, now is the time to revisit and strengthen this piece of legislation.

In September of 2018, the State of California passed Senate Bill 1045, which provides for the formation of a 5-year pilot program consisting of housing based conservatorship policies in San Francisco and Los Angeles Counties. SB 1045 increases the responsiveness of courts to individuals lacking capacity to take care of their health and welfare in by making available a conservatorship when those individuals are suffering from both a severe mental illness as well as a substance use disorder, something we are unable to achieve under the current standard. Individuals that fail to qualify as "gravely disabled" often get stuck in a chronic cycle of coming in and out of 72-hour psychiatric holds, and are victims of a dysfunctional system that is in desperate need of reform. We would like to see Santa Clara County advocate for inclusion in this or comparable legislation that effectively treats the most vulnerable in our County.

For all these reasons and more, we urge the County to act to strengthen conservatorship laws and to adopt Laura's Law.

Signed:



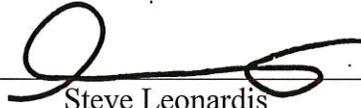
Johnny Khamis
Councilmember, City of San José



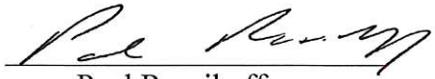
Raul Peralez
Councilmember, City of San José



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Steve Leonardis
Mayor, Town of Los Gatos



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Katherine Decker
Registered Nurse



Stephani Rideau
Parent of Homeless Mentally Ill Adult