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LOS ANGELES
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October 21, 2010

Via First Class Mail

Planning Commissioners
City of Los Angeles
200 North Main Street, Room 272
Los Angeles, CA 90012

FILE COPY

Re: Agenda Item Continued from 10/14/10 CPC Hearing - "Community Care Facilities Ordinance"
Council File: 07-3427
Case No. CPC-2009-800-CA

Dear Commissioners:

Mental Health America of Los Angeles (MHA) would like to take this opportunity to comment on the "Community Care Facilities" ordinance that was sent back to the Planning Department by the Planning Commission during its meeting on October 14, 2010. As a provider of services to persons living with psychiatric disabilities, MHA appreciates the fact that the City of Los Angeles, through the proposed ordinance, accepted the importance of easing barriers to siting housing for persons with disabilities. We know from experience, and our clients will tell you, that access to safe, affordable and supportive housing is at the heart of a productive life in the community.

We are concerned however, that the proposed zoning provisions, as currently written, may serve to limit the location of a wide range of independent living arrangements for persons with disabilities, including those living with mental illness. Specifically, the seeming intent on the part of the City to limit to one, the number of leases within a single rented "dwelling unit". Aside from the factually and legally flawed interference with privacy rights, the creation of what is proposed to be a "bright line" for distinguishing between a family use and a boarding house use would lead to the destruction of creative and effective options for bridging the gap between congregate care and independent living for those we serve.

We need hardly argue that affordable housing of any type is in short supply in Los Angeles. In even shorter supply are independent, but supportive housing opportunities for persons with mental illness, especially transitionally aged youth between the ages of 18-25. Often, when it comes to housing options, these clients are faced with a choice between a congregate and controlled licensed board and care facility that they neither want nor need or a single room

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MHA Programs:
MHA Village
Antelope Valley Services
Transition Age Youth Programs
Homeless Assistance Programs

Un Paso Mas
Wellness Centers
Workforce Development
Project Return Peer Support Network

A United Way Agency
Advocacy
Housing Development
Public Information and Assistance
Training, Consulting and Evaluation

10.21.10

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apartment that lacks support and can often lead to isolation. What is desperately needed are housing options that provide an opportunity to challenge clients (who number in the thousands in Los Angeles) to develop the skills necessary to live independently while at the same time providing much needed support. A multiple lease arrangement allows individuals to live in the same household in a "family-like" way, while giving landlords and property owners the flexibility to deal with individuals whose behavior becomes disruptive to the other residents as well as surrounding neighbors. Under a single lease agreement, a property owner would be left only with the option of evicting everyone in order to address the problems created by one person. This limitation only serves to reduce the number of affordable housing opportunities for those we serve.

We could spend additional time here going into the details of how fair housing reasonable accommodations would be negatively impacted with a single lease requirement, as well as the confidentiality concerns that would arise with the production and review of lease agreements, but we think it more important to ask the City to help our clients recover by not limiting an essential ingredient for their recovery – safe, affordable and supportive housing.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Pilon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being more prominent than the last name "Pilon".

David Pilon, Ph.D., CPRP
President & CEO