



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR,  
BOARD PRESIDENT,  
SUPERVISORS, AND CITY  
COUNCIL

**FROM:** Councilmember Johnny Khamis  
City of San José, District 10

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** April 29, 2019

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

4/29/19

**SUBJECT: JOINT CITY-COUNTY MEETING ON HOMELESSNESS:  
RECOMMENDATION FOR ADOPTION OF LAURA'S LAW BY THE  
COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA AND THE DEDICATION OF ST. LOUISE  
REGIONAL HOSPITAL TO IN-PATIENT MENTAL HEALTH AND  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT FOR THE MOST SEVERELY  
EFFECTED UNHOUSED INDIVIDUALS**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Board of Supervisors adopt Laura's Law for the County of Santa Clara to allow for out-patient treatment of the severely mentally ill and explore the possibility of conservatorships for those in most need of care who are in need of in-patient treatment for mental health or addiction treatment.
2. That the Board of Supervisors consider utilizing the recently-acquired St. Louise Regional Medical Center as an in-patient care facility for the most severely mentally ill or addiction-impaired individuals who are unhoused.

## BACKGROUND

According to the report "Home Not Found: The Cost of Homelessness in Silicon Valley", local government is spending \$520 million per year providing services to the homeless, via health care, social services, and justice systems alone. In addition, we will spend over \$1 billion in Measure A and other sources of funds, such as from the City's Housing Impact Fee on new housing construction, to build new housing in Silicon Valley, including supportive housing for those who are presently unhoused. Our residents expect results for all of this investment, and yet we see the very same people on our streets wasting away year after year – some severely mentally ill and others with extreme addictions. We have yet to utilize all the tools available to us to help lift them out of their misery, reduce their antisocial effects on the community, and relieve the taxpayers of the excessive costs these individuals impose on our healthcare and justice systems.

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While there is much encouraging news to report as a result of County and City efforts to improve the lives of unhoused people in the Silicon Valley – a County-wide database to track service provided to clients, a 100%+ increase in shelter beds, new supportive housing units online or under construction, improved homelessness prevention programs, and increased targeting of programs based upon client needs, such as the LGBTQ-focused shelter, there are tools that we have left out of the toolbox to deal with the most problematic and costly of our chronic homeless population. One is a tool that has been available to us that the County has yet to utilize: Laura's Law. Another tool is a new opportunity given the County's successful acquisition of the St. Louise Regional Hospital – a dedicated facility for the most severely mentally ill and addicted individuals on our streets.

After 13 years of resistance and overcoming the opposition of certain civil libertarians and so-called mental health "advocates", in 2015 the San Francisco Board of Supervisors enacted Laura's Law – also known as the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program. Laura's law provides intensive case management and long-term treatment and can compel court-ordered treatment if a participant does not stick with the treatment regime. After three years, the program is being reported to be a big success and is generating huge savings from reduced interactions with emergency rooms and the justice system.

In an article in the April 21<sup>st</sup> San Francisco Examiner entitled "New report finds Laura's Law is helping the mentally ill," reporter Joshua Sabatini cited a recent evaluation of the first three years of Laura's Law in San Francisco which found that "129 participants were costing a combined \$485,000 monthly in city services before entering the program, but with the program, the cost dropped by 83 percent to \$81,745 per month." It was also noted that the number of the individuals who experienced Psychiatric Emergency Services dropped 47 percent and those with a recent incarceration dropped 37%.

In addition to adopting Laura's Law, Mayor London Breed of San Francisco is exploring the use of conservatorships to take control of the health decisions of unhoused individuals who are unable to make decisions for themselves, with court approval. The court's involvement in the temporary conservatorship decision ensures due process for the individuals involved with a goal of getting their mental health stabilized and/or their addictions under control. A person under conservatorship could be required to spend time in an in-patient care facility, and if Santa Clara County were to pursue this opportunity, having an in-patient facility available would be critical to the program's success. St. Louise Regional Hospital could be an ideal facility for this type of care.

With the County's recent acquisition of certain assets of Verity Health, the County has a unique opportunity to add much-needed capacity to provide in-patient mental health and addiction care. I encourage the County to take a look at the underutilized St. Louise Regional Medical Center facility and evaluate the possibility of focusing the mission of St. Louise on restoring the health and wellbeing of unhoused individuals with the most severe treatment needs. This could be a key piece of the puzzle in getting the most problematic chronic homeless individuals off our streets and prepared for transitional housing, out-patient care, and, ultimately, permanent supportive housing or other housing options for which they become suited.

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The City and County are undertaking a broad array of activities built around the Housing First model for helping the unhoused from diversion programs, increased shelter beds, and safe parking locations to more transitional housing, permanent supportive housing units, and affordable housing. It's important for us to adopt additional tools to make us even more successful in our efforts, including Laura's Law, conservatorships, and new in-patient facilities, such as that for which St. Louise Regional Medical Center may be well-suited.