

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS
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Protecting Board and Care Residents from “Transfer Trauma”

Individuals who are discharged from a psychiatric hospital or jail struggle to find a home to return to. Re-entering the community and navigating the social services sector is daunting, particularly when the main goal is to address basic human needs such as shelter. With LA County’s current shortage of housing options, this vulnerable population can quickly descend into addiction and homelessness. According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority’s (LAHSA) 2019 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, there were 58,936 individuals experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County. Of that number, 25% of these individuals report that they have a serious mental illness while 15% report that they have a substance use disorder. Safe and affordable housing is truly challenging to obtain, particularly when an individual has a mental health condition, a substance use disorder, or both.

Adult Residential Facilities (ARFs), also known as Board and Cares, have served as a refuge for thousands of individuals living with a serious mental illness, co-occurring disorder, or developmental disability. These State-licensed facilities provide medication management, daily supervision, 24-hour staff coverage, and meal preparation for individuals who cannot live on their own and need assistance with daily tasks. The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) has placed clients into Board and Cares since the 1990’s. These facilities are integrated into residential communities, providing clients an opportunity to focus on recovery in a non-institutional setting, which in turn reduces reliance on costly emergency room visits.

However, the future of the Board and Care system continues to look bleak. As

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highlighted in the 2018 Los Angeles County Mental Health Commission report, Board and Care closures continue to occur at an alarming rate. Moreover, there are multiple Board and Care licenses currently under review with no guarantee that they will be approved. The County continues to face a crisis with respect to the survival of this critical housing resource reserved for one of its most vulnerable populations. The harsh reality of more Board and Care closures will exacerbate our housing crisis. In 2018, the Board recognized the severity of the issue and passed a motion that directs the health agencies to determine how we can address this crisis. Over the past year, the County has been convening multiple stakeholder meetings, pursuing State legislation, working on a comprehensive report to ensure the continued sustainability of these facilities, and created a Board and Care Network to provide ongoing support. In the meantime, we need to guarantee that Board and Care clients have a coordinated transition in the event of a facility closure, and the County can be a partner in this process.

According to the State of California Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD), many residents at these facilities experience “Transfer Trauma” at the time these closures occur. Residents at these facilities become confused and distraught, particularly those who have lived at their Board and Care for more than five years. Tracy Greene Mintz, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a nationally recognized expert on “Relocation Stress,” explains that this phenomenon is well known and can be especially traumatic for vulnerable clients who have difficulty comprehending the reasons why the transfer is occurring.

While the County continues to explore new investment options and identify funding sources to expand its efforts to maintain Board and Care across the County, it is imperative to ensure that the individuals affected by the closures are not left behind. There are negative health consequences that an individual can experience when they are relocated from a home they have occupied for several years. Individuals with complex mental health needs can begin to experience loss of control, loss of predictability, and hopelessness. These Board and Care closures are traumatic and often sudden. The County should ensure that those individuals directly affected by these closures do not fall into deep despair and into homelessness.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DIRECT THE
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH TO:**

1. Coordinate with the State of California Community Care Licensing Division to establish and/or strengthen a standardized notification protocol to inform DMH of impending Board and Care closures.
2. Develop a plan, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer's Homeless Initiative, Housing for Health and other relevant County departments, that provides and/or links adequate support services, including but not limited to housing, mental health treatment, and substance use recovery programs, to individuals who are displaced by the closure of a Board and Care;
3. Report back to the Board with the findings and recommendations in 60 days.

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