



CITY OF MANTECA

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October 5, 2021

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Jerome C. Wilverding
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Re: Assembly Bill 1976 (Laura’s Law/Assisted Outpatient Treatment)

To the Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors and Mr. Wilverding,

On the evening of April 20, 2021, the City Council for the City of Manteca was prepared to send your Board the attached letter (see Attachment 1) requesting that the County of San Joaquin not opt out of Laura’s Law/Assisted Outpatient Treatment (“AOT”).

Earlier that same day, however, at the Regular Meeting of the County Board of Supervisors, your Board (through a 3-0 vote, with one (1) abstention) adopted a resolution authorizing County Behavioral Health Services (“BHS”) to opt-out of AOT services on or before July 1, 2021. During this meeting, while BHS representatives expressed the desire to opt-in to AOT at some point in the future, staff also represented that they believed the Innovative Support Program in Recovery and Engagement (“InSPIRE”) program (established in 2011) would suffice to cover individuals who are at risk and need services.

After researching, analyzing, and comparing Laura’s Law to InSPIRE, the City of Manteca offers the following assessment for your consideration.

BHS’ InSPIRE program provides **voluntary** services to individuals between the ages of 18-59 who are hesitant or resistant to engage in mental health treatment. BHS states about the program: “Although services are voluntary, staff provide extra motivation and encouragement to successfully engage participants in services without additional court interventions.” BHS describes this “extra motivation and encouragement” as daily contacts to build rapport and provide a

framework for voluntary mental health treatment. The goal is to engage clients, improve client stability, self-sufficiency, maintain engagement in outpatient treatment services, support placement in safe and stable housing environments, and provide individualized safety plans for clients and their family as needed.

Unfortunately, InSPIRE does not include or focus on the population of San Joaquin County residents who do not wish to voluntarily agree to the above mentioned services and who are much more at risk than the individuals the InSPIRE program serves.

In contrast to InSPIRE, AOT is a sustained and intensive court-ordered outpatient treatment for individuals with mental illness who may be at risk of grave disability, deterioration in life skills and functioning, self-harm, and/or violence towards others. **AOT is not an alternative to voluntary treatment; instead, it is a way to get services to those County residents in need who refuse voluntary treatment.**

Under Laura's Law¹, individuals who meet specific criteria will have a petition filed with the court, recommending that the individual be ordered to participate in mental health services. The individual is represented in court by a public defender; the County is represented by an attorney from the County Counsel's Office, with the client being BHS. AOT services must include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Community-based, mobile, multidisciplinary, highly trained mental health teams that use high staff-to-client ratios of no more than 10:1.
2. A service planning and delivery process that includes plan and design of mental health services, including provision for services for physically-disabled individuals, older adults, and consultation with family members.
3. Each client shall have a clearly designated mental health personal services coordinator.
4. Individual services plans shall ensure that persons receive age-appropriate, gender-appropriate, and culturally appropriate services.
5. The individual personal services plan must describe the service array.

¹ To date, several counties have implemented Laura's Law in California, including (but not limited to): Kern County, Los Angeles County, Sacramento County, Nevada County, Orange County, Placer County, Stanislaus County, San Diego County, San Mateo County, Santa Clara County, Santa Cruz County, Yolo County, Contra Costa County, the City and County of San Francisco, Ventura County, San Luis Obispo County, Humboldt County, Alameda County, Marin County, El Dorado County, Tulare County, Riverside County, and Mendocino County.

(Welf. & Inst. Code, § 5348.)

Additionally, a county that operates an AOT program must report certain data to the State Department of Health Care Services, including an evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategies employed by each program in reducing homelessness and hospitalization of persons in the program and in reducing involvement with local law enforcement by persons in the program. (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 5348, subd. (d).)

The following chart provides a basic comparison between the two programs:

PROGRAM	COURT-ORDERD	VOLUNTARY	HOMELESSNESS COMPONENT BY STATUTE	COORDINATION WITH LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT
InSPIRE		X		
Laura's Law	X		X	X

A comparison between the two (2) programs demonstrates that while the InSPIRE program may serve a certain, limited portion of the population within San Joaquin County, it does not include the higher risk category of individuals who need court-ordered AOT.² Moreover, Laura's Law results in coordination between the county and local jurisdictions to collaborate on getting assistance to higher risk individuals with a mandated focus on homelessness. Indeed, in practice throughout California counties where Laura's Law is implemented, local law enforcement and counties collaborate on providing services to those individuals who need them the most.

Based on the above analysis, the City of Manteca requests that your Board reconsider its vote to opt out of Laura's Law; the City submits that AOT is necessary to address and assist an important and vulnerable segment of the population not only in the City of Manteca, but throughout San Joaquin County.

Very truly yours,

Benjamin J. Cantu
Mayor

² It is also worth noting that within the past five (5) months, City of Manteca staff has not been contacted by BHS and/or County staff regarding the InSPIRE program and how it could help City of Manteca residents.

cc: L. David Nefouse, City Attorney
Mark Myles, County Counsel

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