

**From:** [Mary Ann Bernard](#)  
**To:** [Behavioral Health Commission](#); [Clerk of the Board Public Email](#)  
**Cc:** [Mary Ann Bernard](#); [Kaino Hopper](#); [Kaino Hopper](#); [Nancy-Wade Brynelson AOT Nami](#); [Patricia Wentzel](#)  
**Subject:** MY COMMENTS BLOCKED BY TECHNOLOGY AT TONIGHT'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMISSION mtg MEETING  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 15, 2026 7:17:29 PM

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To the Behavioral Health Commission and my fellow Sacramento FAISMI (Sacramento Family Advocates for Individuals with Severe Mental Illness):

I twice tried to give oral comment at tonight's meeting but the technology didn't seem to be working. I could not unblock my microphone though staff tried both times to help.

This does NOT prevent me from speaking in writing, fortunately.

Commissioners, you are here to address what you will be doing and since it is not on your agenda I attempted to address what you *shouldn't* be doing—which is what your predecessors did, which is the reason you exist.

I support Synergy's statement—they work with the severely mentally ill ("SMIs")—and am a member of Sacramento FAISMI, Families Adocating for Individuals with Severe Mental Illness, headed up by Kaino Hopper, whose statement I also wholeheartedly support.

My essential summary: don't do what your predecessors did.

As shown by my signature block I am a lawyer with fancy degrees who for 18 years represented public mental hospitals in another state, which by definition housed the most severely mentally ill ("SMI") individuals. Along with Rose King, one of the authors of the Mental Health Services Act ("MHSA") I also brought the lawsuit that is at least part of the reason this new Commission exists. I also have an SMI loved one, who is lucky to be alive. If he had lived in Sacramento County when he was an unstable young teen—assuming the current status quo—I have no doubt he would be dead. As it is he is stable on excellent medication, has a good job and has never been in jail.

You will be under great pressure from groups that got millions of dollars under the MHSA for people with minor mental health diagnoses or NO diagnoses, and who weren't even in danger of receiving a future diagnosis-- to give them money *they never should have received to begin with. They should NOT have been receiving MHSA funds.* It was a violation of both the letter and spirit of MHSA but funds were systematically siphoned away from the sickest people to people who are not and never will be sick because the worried well --unlike SMIs and their

families who bump from crisis to crisis—have time and energy to advocate for their perceived but minor needs. The misnamed "Oversight and Accountability Commission" was part of the problem, but so were county Behavioral Health Directors ("BHDs")—including ours—who were perfectly happy to continue the status quo of pushing their sickest and most troublesome clients off their budgets and into to the jails, the streets and the morgues, so they could concentrate on the mental "health" of people who aren't even sick. Sacramento has a particular problem because its jail is under court order (the Mays Decree) for 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment violations—that means "Cruel and Unusual Punishment" --due in part to overcrowding which our BHD and others have exacerbated by focusing resources on people with minor or no mental health diagnoses, while ignoring or minimizing the needs of people with the most serious ones. .

I should mention that I attended a number of MHSA committee meetings when I first moved to Sacramento and was utterly horrified by what I saw. Meetings operated like a medieval court—people getting funding that they shouldn't have lavished praise and adoration on the committee members like medieval courtiers, who then lavished praise back. Mutual admiration societies with little or no substance. It was nauseating. County staff were remarkably ignorant both of the MHSA and of what the ambit of their duties should be. They misrepresented MHSA and ignored the Brown Act.

Fortunately the new law took power away from the misnamed Oversight and Accountability Commission and systematically prioritizes the most severely ill, so you will have less ability to abuse it, assuming you are inclined to do so. I hope you are not.

In sum, please don't try to abuse your mandate. The sickest people are not being served and it is your job to be sure that changes, and that resources are not siphoned off for voluntary programs for people who aren't even sick. You will have to listen to everybody but please remind them of the statutory priorities and DON'T siphon money to them that was intended for people far sicker than they are, who aren't being served. who cannot volunteer for treatment because they suffer from anosognosia and can't even recognize that they are sick.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann Bernard  
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Stanford with honors '75  
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Plaintiff with MHSA drafter Rose

King and counsel in *Bernard & King v CHFFA et al* (Third App Dist. CA—the case that put the Care Act on the ballot)