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**From:** Behavioral Health Commission  
**Subject:** BHC 5.20.26 Public Comment #2

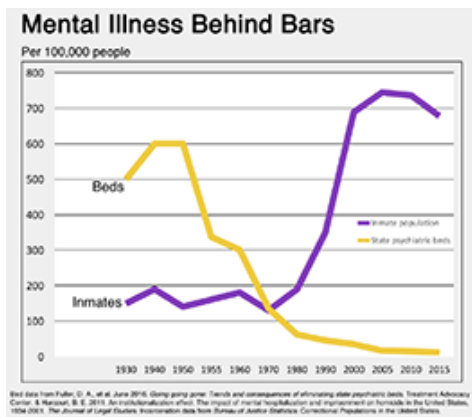
Letter referenced below attached as following pages

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**From:** Mary Ann Bernard  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 20, 2026 9:01 AM  
**To:** Behavioral Health Commission ; Clerk of the Board Public Email  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT TONIGHT AGENDA ITEM #5

To Whom It May Concern:

Please see that all members of the Commission receive this letter. Thank you.



**Mary Ann Bernard**  
 1618 Alhambra Blvd #160994  
 Sacramento CA 95816  
 SBN 211417 (inactive-retired)



May 20, 2026

**To All Members of the Sacramento County Behavioral Health Commission: ADOPT AND SEND THE DRAFT LETTER THAT IS AGENDA ITEM #5**

I am a retired lawyer and resident of this county, formerly an AAG in another state where I represented, *inter alia*, state mental hospitals, including the one that housed the “mentally ill and [very, very] dangerous.” I also belong to NAMI, Sacramento FAISMI (Families Advocating for Individuals with Severe Mental Illness) and similar organizations because I have a loved one with a severe mental illness (“SMI”), who is doing well and fortunately for him does not live here. I speak only on my own behalf.

I ask that all members of this Commission vote to adopt agenda item #5, the draft letter regarding continuation of CWRT and 988 and respite centers. I also ask this Commission to persist for as long as it takes to ensure these programs stay active and funded.

The proposal to drop crisis response programs IS a crisis of major proportions. If you don’t work to solve it, people will die. Some of them will be the sickest of the severely mentally ill—the very people you exist to protect--some will be family members and loved ones who are the most frequent victims of those very ill individuals, and some will be members of the public. The overcrowding at the county jail which resulted in Sacramento’s Mays Consent Decree will get worse because even more people will end up there who could have been kept in the community using the crisis services that may be dropped. The public in this county and others will suffer from their crimes, many of which are relatively harmless “status” crimes that could easily be prevented through proper treatment.

As the letter you are asked to sign notes, there is copious data demonstrating that treating severe mental illness is not only more humane but also *far cheaper* than pushing SMIs into the jails, the streets and (often) the morgues, the status quo in most of California and

certainly in this county, e.g., <https://siepr.stanford.edu/publications/policy-brief/how-better-access-mental-health-care-can-reduce-crime> & <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/treatment-alternatives-incarceration-people-mental-health-needs-0>.

Many statewide advocates like myself are writing and calling the governor as well as our political representatives to point out how funding alternative crisis response programs saves money, reduces suffering, and in many cases is the only crisis response available because sheriffs departments across the state are refusing to respond to 5150 calls.

At a public meeting I attended, Sheriff Cooper represented that the 988 and CWRT teams were taking care of the crisis he created by refusing to participate in 5150s. (He spent the first 8 minutes of his speech on this. You can hear it here: [https://youtu.be/wDqX\\_DAMytc](https://youtu.be/wDqX_DAMytc)) Whether this is true is debatable. What is irrefutable is that these services and teams have saved lives and alleviated much human misery, and without them lives will be lost and suffering will get worse.

Please adopt and send this letter.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann Bernard  
Mother of an SMI adult son  
Stanford with honors '75  
U.Chicago Law '78  
Former counsel to mental  
hospitals in another state  
SBN 211417(inactive-retired)  
Plaintiff with MHSA drafter Rose  
King and counsel in *Bernard &  
King v CHFFA et al* (Third App  
Dist. CA—the case that put Prop.2  
(2018) on the ballot)