CONTRA COSTA
HEALTH SERVICES

1340 Arnold Drive, Suite 200
Martinez, California 94553
Ph (925) 957-5140
Fax (925) 957-5156

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION

The Contra Costa County Mental Health Commission has a dual mission: 1) To influence the County's Mental Health System to ensure the delivery of quality services which are effective, efficient, culturally relevant and responsive to the needs and desires of the clients it serves with dignity and respect; and 2) to be the advocate with the Board of Supervisors, the Mental Health Division, and the community on behalf of all Contra Costa County residents who are in need of mental health services.

January 31, 2014

William B. Walker, M.D.
Health Services Director
50 Douglas Dr., Ste, 310-A
Martinez, CA 94553

Dear Dr. Walker,

In response to your proposal to appoint Director of Behavior Health Services Cynthia Belon to the vacant position of Director of Mental Health, the Contra Costa County Mental Health Commission met on January 23, 2014, and voted on the following motion:

"The Mental Health Commission strongly urges the Health Services Director William Walker, MD, to seek and hire a Mental Health Director in consultation and partnership with the Mental Health Commission per Welfare and Institutions Code 5604.2 (a) (6)."

Reference is made to Welfare & Institutions Code statute 5604.2.(a) (6) *Review and make recommendations on applicants for the appointment of a local director of mental health services. The board shall be included in the selection process prior to the vote of the governing body.*

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sam Yoshioka, Chairman
Contra Costa County Mental Health Commission

cc: Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, Supervisor Karen Mitchoff, Chair

The Contra Costa County Mental Health Commission is appointed by the Board of Supervisors to advise them on all matters related to the county's mental health system, in accordance with mandates set forth in the California State Welfare & Institutions Code, Sections 5604 (a)(1)-5605.5. Any comments ore recommendations made by the Mental Health Commission or its individual members do not represent the official position of the county or any of its officers.

Charles D. Madison
600 Rock Oak Road
Walnut Creek, CA 94598

February 3, 2014

Contra Costa County Board Of Supervisors
Supervisor Karen Mitchoff, Chair

Re: Health Service Director Proposed appointment of Mental Health Director

Dear Supervisor Mitchoff,

As an individual and member of NAMI Contra Costa, I concur with the Mental Health Commission's motion of January 23, 2014, "to seek and hire a Mental Health Director in consultation and partnership with the Mental Health Commission".

It seems there is a lot of arbitrary decision making by the County's Health Services group that does not seek any input from the stakeholders of our County.

Sincerely,

Charles D. Madison

From: The Families of the Mentally Ill

Tomorrow, Tuesday February 4, Dr. Walker will petition the Board of Supervisors to appoint Cynthia Belon to be the interim Director of the Mental Health Division.

Cynthia had been the director of the Homeless Division for about 10 years when she was selected to be the director of the Behavioral Health Department.

The new Behavioral Health Department was created to combine the:

1. Homeless Division	$1.8 million	1%	6 Employees
2. Alcohol and Other Drugs	$15 million	9%	15 Employees
3. Mental Health Division	$140. million	89%	300+ Employees

So with the experience of managing a 88% smaller organization than the Mental Health Division, Cynthia was selected to lead a department that has had considerable problems

She has spent millions of dollars on consultants to give direction. To no avail.
She had not been successful in bringing the three divisions together. And now is to be charged with the management of the Mental Health division in addition to her existing duties.

Donna Wygand and Susan Trevano had deep mental health backgrounds in mental health and a knowledge of their financial needs.

They could be depended on to not allow MHSA dollars to be diverted to deserving but not mentally ill groups. The MHSA is fundamentally for the serious and chronically mental ill.
Not for various troubled groups.

It is imperative that the Mental Health Division be led by someone who will effectively
Fight for those monies for the mentally ill.

It is also imperative that to reverse the low moral in the Mental Health Division a strong, experienced leader is required.

The appointment of Cynthia Belon would not accomplish that.

The CPAW Steering Committee members have today issued a strong letter of concern about this appointment and the status of the system's progress. This is the leadership of the MHSA Stakeholder body statutorily bound to oversee the system transformation. Their concerns must be considered.

The mental health system has shown clear evidence of growing crisis with very little if any progress. The families and consumers carry the burden of this crisis. While we have seen millions spent to hire consultants, we have seen no additional positions filled to support families. NAMI Contra Costa sees the evidence of this gap in our support groups and Family-to-Family sessions. We are willing and strong partners with all but we cannot be the only safety net for the families of those with the most serious mental illnesses in Contra Costa.

The Board of Director's of NAMI Contra Costa join the mental health community stakeholders to strongly and respectfully urge the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors to reconsider making this a permanent appointment. We can and must do better to find a leader who has the capacity to lead all integration efforts forward with intentional attention to the complexities of the Mental Health system.

The Board of Director's of NAMI Contra Costa join the mental health community stakeholders to strongly and respectfully urge the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors to reconsider making this a permanent appointment. We can and must do better to find a leader who has the capacity to lead all integration efforts forward with intentional attention to the complexities of the Mental Health system.

Rev
SD. 3

KATHI McLAUGHLIN
LORI HEFNER

February 2, 2014

District 1 Supervisor John M. Gioia
District II Supervisor Candace Andersen
District III Supervisor Many N. Piepho
District IV Supervisor Karen Mitchoff
District V Supervisor Federal D. Glover
Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
651 Pine St.
Room 107
Martinez, CA 94553

Dear Members of the Board:

On Tuesday, February 4th, Dr. Walker will be asking you to appoint Cynthia Belon, the Behavioral Health Director, as the Mental Health Director. Two and a half years ago Dr. Walker asked you to create a Behavioral Health Division, combining Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs, and Homeless Services into one comprehensive division in order to better serve our consumers with multiple or overlapping needs and diagnosis. This was done with minimal community input and included one division unique to this county--Homeless Services. Usually Behavioral Health Divisions or Departments include Public Health or Social Services with AOD and Mental Health. I have not been able to find a single instance where Homeless Services (as separate from Public Health) were included. At the same time you were asked to appoint Cynthia Belon, the Homeless Services Director, as the Behavioral Health Director. Ms. Belon *overnight* moved from supervising less than thirty employees and a budget of about $20 million, to supervising more than 500 employees with a combined budget of about $200 million. At that time she was the Division Director with the least amount of experience supervising the smallest budget and the least number of employees. Mental Health advocates questioned this at the time but were willing to withhold judgment pending performance. The integration of these three divisions has been going on now for nearly three years. The County has spent *hundreds of thousands* of dollars on hand-picked consultants to facilitate this process. What do we have to show for it? Are our clinics integrated? Can consumers "enter through any door "and receive whatever services they need seamlessly? If you are a child experiencing mental health problems that are exacerbated by your family's homelessness or yours or your parent's substance abuse can you get all the services you need in one place? If you are an older adult experiencing depression and experiencing financial, physical, or emotional abuse from your caregiver do you have

somewhere to go or someone to talk to the first time you need help? In short, if you are a consumer of mental health services who is affected by homelessness or substance abuse are you better off today than you were before these divisions were combined? I believe the answer is a resounding "NO!!!" That's not to say that some consumers aren't better off--but it is to say that in most instances we are better off either because of services provided under the Mental Health Services Act, or because of the dedication of line staff who do their best to get us the services we need, ***despite not because of***, leadership from the Health Services Department or the Behavioral Health Services Division!

More than a year ago over 150 mental health consumers, mental health providers, educators, youth advocates, attorneys, disability rights activists, members of labor unions, County Mental Health Commissioners, union representatives and citizens crowded into the Board of Supervisor Chambers to loudly and strongly tell the Board that we were angry, frustrated and very disappointed by the less than transparent means by which the new Mental Health Director, Steven Grolnic-McClurg, was recruited, vetted and appointed. We told the Board that the interview process developed by the Behavioral Health Director was less than fair and appeared to be designed to discredit other candidates in favor of Mr. McClurg. We told the Board we had tremendous concerns about his lack of experience and preparation as a mid-level non-profit manager to lead such a complex public division, with a $140 million budget and over 400 employees. This was so far outside of his experience that we questioned his reasons for accepting the position. To his credit, after being hired as Mental Health Director in January of 2013, Mr. McClurg worked hard to dispel our concerns. He modeled the transparency which had been sadly lacking while the Behavioral Health Director was the Acting Mental Health Director, and was on his way to regaining the badly broken trust of the Mental Health community when--less than a year later--he abruptly resigned in order to take a similar position, but with a much smaller agency in terms of budget, employees, and complexity!

We find ourselves asking "Why"? Why did he accept the position in the first place? Why did he resign so abruptly? Was he overwhelmed by his position? Was there any other underlying reason possibly associated with his willingness to be more open and transparent? And most importantly, why did Dr. Walker and Ms. Belon fail ***once again*** to listen to the community? Why rush to appoint Ms. Belon as the *permanent* Mental Health Director? What has changed from a year ago that made Ms. Belon an appropriate choice? After Suzanne Tavano left as Mental Health Director, why did the County go through two recruitment processes instead of just appointing Ms. Belon at that time? We (the Mental Health community) were told that Ms. Belon lacked the qualifications to be Mental Health Director. What has changed? It is certainly not that she has achieved the trust and support of the Mental Health Commission, the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Consolidated Planning and Advisory Workgroup (CPAW) or the support of most Mental Health Advocates! Even more importantly, she has failed to gain the trust of the Mental Health Division's supervisors and managers (although they can't speak publicly for fear of reprisals the atmosphere of distrust and fear is palpable the minute you walk into the Mental Health offices)! It is also clear that neither Ms. Belon's attitude towards the Mental Health community, nor her commitment

to transparency and open communication have changed. As you may know, the Mental Health Services Act brings in $40 million in *new* money every year. The act also requires that stakeholders, which must include consumers and family members as well community members, must be included in the planning and evaluation of programs funded by MHSA. In Contra Costa that group is known as CPAW. Ms. Belon had difficulty participating in CPAW meetings when she was Acting Director a year ago, actually commenting to some participants that CPAW was a joke. She hasn't been able to find the time to attend our meetings since Mr. McClurg left and I don't remember her attending any meetings in support of Mr. McClurg when he was hired. Has nothing been learned from the rupture of public trust by not holding a professional, nationwide recruitment, seriously seeking out the most competent mental health leadership in the country as we did with Donna M. Wigand and Suzanne Travano? In fact, she is often absent from everything! According to many sources, she is seldom at her desk and often away on vacation or home sick. How will she be able to do two jobs when she can't do the one she was hired for?

In the last two recruitments, California mental health leadership was so appalled by Dr. Walker's treatment of Ms. Wigand and Ms. Tavano that many qualified professionals chose not to apply for what had been, at one time a prestigious, respected, and influential position. When and why did Contra Costa Mental Health move from being a state and national leader in consumer and family oriented programs to being a division that can't recruit strong, courageous leaders who are committed to transparency and working in collaboration with those affected by mental illness? At one time Contra Costa County had the programs, services, and leaders that the state and nation looked to for exemplary programs that supported recovery and resiliency. We were leaders! Sad to say we are not leaders any more. Are we appointing Ms. Belon to this important position because we are too ashamed to admit that quality mental health professionals don't want to work for us? If that is the case then ***shame on us!***

We are calling on you, as our elected representatives, to halt this permanent appointment. We understand the need to appoint an Acting Mental Health Director, because the law requires us to have someone designated in that capacity. However; under the Welfare and Institutions Code (W&I) Number 5604.2 the Mental Health Commission MUST : "Review and make recommendations on applicants for the appointment of a local director of mental health services. The board shall be ***included*** in the selection process prior to the vote of the governing body." At the December meeting of the Commission Dr. Walker announced his intention to hire Ms. Belon without a selection process. He did not include the Commission in the process as required by law, he simply told them what he intended to do. On January 23rd the Commission voted unanimously, with one abstention, to request that you postpone appointing Ms. Belon as the Mental Health Director. We are asking you to support the Mental Health Commission's request by making Ms. Belon's appointment temporary because Dr. Walker's unilateral action appears to violate state law and could put our funding and services at risk. We also ask you to direct Dr. Walker to immediately hire an appropriate search firm experienced in nation-wide searches for this type of professional. We are also asking that you ensure that the community, including

consumers and family members, as well as the Mental Health Commission (as required by law) be ***included*** in the review and interview process. Given the less than objective process designed by the Ms. Belon last time, we ask that you provide direction and oversight to ensure that the process is not only transparent but also fair, balanced, and unbiased. At a minimum we ask that all candidates be asked the same questions, be given equal time, and that all interview panelists be required to state any conflict of interest and refrain from making personal comments or observations about the candidates. If either Dr. Walker or Ms. Belon opposes these requests we call for their immediate resignations. This may seem harsh but the level of disregard shown to us, the consumers and loved ones of these services *again* has created a permanent rupture of our trust in these individuals. Our mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, aunts and uncles, and grandparents deserve first class care in this county. We deserve no less! The current leadership seems totally unable to adequately address persistent issues of distrust and lack of transparency and inclusion.

Once again we stakeholders are now required to have the strength and fortitude to keep pointing this out to Contra Costa County leadership and this is at the cost of our own personhood, mental wellness, self-care, and resiliency. It is not our job to train these people for these high-level public administrator positions for which they are inadequately prepared. We demand the quality of leadership for those suffering serious and persistent mental illness, these individuals and their families that hang in the balance and the huge public sums at stake.

Respectfully,

Kathi McLaughlin
706 Soto St.
Martinez, CA 94553
(925) 372-6886
kathimclaughlin@comcast.net
CPAW Member
Co-Chair CPAW Innovation Committee
Co-Chair CPAW Membership Committee
Member CPAW Steering Committee
Board Member, Martinez USD
Delegate, California School Boards Assn.
Member, Conditions of Children Task Force,
Cities, Counties and Schools Partnership

Respectfully,

Lori Hefner, MBA, MA, NCG, CLPF
25 A Crescent Dr.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
(925) 200-7192
Lori@LoriHefner.com
CPAW Member
Member CPAW Aging and Older Adult
Committee
Member CPAW Steering Committee
Gerontologist, Fiduciary and
Conservator

Cc
Dr. William Walker, MD
Health Officer for Contra Costa County and the
Director of Contra Costa Health Services

w/ SD.3

Lauren Rettagliata
171 Merano Street
Danville, CA 94526
925-683-3299 *cell & text*

Public Comment February 4th 2014
Agenda Item SD.3
Please read this during public comments

Dear Dr. William Walker
Supervisors of Contra Costa County

Re: Appointment of Mental Health Director

I am writing this as a private citizen not as a Mental Health Commissioner. I am a member of the Commission; however, in order to perform the mandated responsibilities of a commissioner—I must first be an informed citizen advocate.

Though I was unable to be present at the Mental Health Commission on December 19, 2013, the letter that was sent to the Commission states that Dr. Walker "presented" Cynthia Belon as the acting Mental Health Director. It is also my understanding that Dr. Walker will ask the Board of Supervisors to confirm Cynthia Belon as the acting Mental Health Director with a new administrative structure that eliminates the position of Mental Health Director.

The objection that I have is that this does not comply with the Welfare and Institutions Code of California 5604.2 (6) that calls for the Mental Health Commission to: *Review and make recommendations on applicants for the appointment of the Contra Costa County Director of Mental Health Services. The Commission shall be included in the selection process prior to the vote of the Board of Supervisors.*

Since the new administrative set up either eliminates the position of Mental Health Director or now has Cynthia Belon as the Mental Health Director—a position that she has not held, I feel that not including the Mental Health Commission in this decision would be in direct violation of the Welfare and Institution Code of the State of California.

The Welfare and Institution Code is the Law of the State of California. We must as a County follow the laws and statutes of our State.

Sincerely,

Lauren Rettagliata

SD-3
2-4-14

Kathi McLaughlin
706 Soto St.
Martinez, CA 94553
(925) 372-6886
kathimclaughlin@comcast.net

TESTIMONY TO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FEBRUARY 4, 2014

Good morning. I am here today to ask you to make this appointment temporary rather than permanent because:

- It violates Welfare and Institutions Code 5604.2 related to the hiring of the Mental Health Director.
  - In the background provided to you by Dr. Walker he references W&I Code 5607 which requires that local mental health services be administered by a local director of mental health services who is to be appointed by the governing body. He did not reference 5604.2 which precedes it.
  - 5604.2 requires that the local Mental Health Commission MUST, and I quote, "***Review and make recommendations*** on applicants for the appointment of a local director of mental health services." It further states that "…the board shall be ***INCLUDED*** in the selection process prior to a vote of the governing body."
    - This has not happened.
      - On December 19th Dr. Walker attended the MH Commission meeting. According to the minutes of that meeting he "announced that he was proposing to appoint Ms. Belon as Acting Director in December and would be requesting her permanent appoint in January."
      - There was a lengthy discussion during which many questions were raised about Ms. Belon's qualifications.
      - Despite those concerns, at the end of the discussion Dr. Walker stated, and again I quote, "**To be clear**, all you are hearing from me today is that I'm **not** going to go out and recruit for a Mental Health Director; I am asking the Board of Supervisors to appoint Cynthia."
    - This is clearly not ***including the board in the selection process prior to a vote of the governing body".***
      - The position was never posted
      - No other internal applicants were asked to apply
      - Dr. Walker's memo states that Ms. Belon meets the requirements to be appointed Mental Health Director, but the Commission (and other stakeholders) were never given the opportunity to review Ms. Belon's qualifications or to interview her or any other potential candidates.

        - 1 year ago the Mental Health community was told that Ms. Belon **did not** possess the qualifications to be Mental Health Director—*WHAT HAS CHANGED*?
    - His memo further states that ***he alone***, not in consultation with the Commission, has "…determined that it is *not necessary* to recruit to fill the Mental Health Director vacancy". In whose opinion is it not necessary?
- The Mental Health Commission met on January 23rd and discussed their concerns.
    - Neither Dr. Walker nor Ms. Belon were in attendance, (although this item was posted on their agenda).
    - With one abstention, the following motion passed unanimously, "The Mental Health Commission strongly urges Dr. Walker to seek and hire a Mental Health Director in consultation with the Mental Health Commission."
        - A letter to that affect was sent to Dr. Walker on January 31st.

There are many reasons why I oppose this appointment, and I am not alone:

- It is opposed by:
    - The Mental Health Commission
    - Members of the MHSA stakeholder workgroup
    - Consumers, family members, and advocates
    - Mental Health Division managers, supervisors, and employees (although they are reluctant to speak for fear of retaliation)

Lori Hefner, another CPAW member, and I have outlined these concerns in a lengthy letter provided to you and members of the press.

The bottom line is that Ms. Belon has shown by her actions that she has minimal understanding of mental health issues confronting consumers and their families. She does not seem to understand or support recovery and resiliency and has failed to include authentic participation by consumers and family members in the integration planning or implementation she has led.

As a 14 year elected official, I am urging you to listen to your community and to research the possible legal ramifications before making this appointment permanent. ***You will lose nothing by waiting*** and could lose funding and community trust by following Dr. Walker's recommendation!