

**Sample Letter in Support of An Alternative to a Proposed Health Agency
for Los Angeles County**

Date

Supervisor
500 West Temple Street
____ Hall of Administration
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Support for an Alternative to a Proposed Health Agency for Los Angeles County

Dear Supervisor _____:

We are extremely concerned about the prospect of a proposed Health Agency for Los Angeles County, and believe that there is a better way to promote integrated care for the clients served by the County Departments of Health, Mental Health, and Public Health, while at the same time ensuring the public health of all of the residents of Los Angeles County.

We believe that the key to better integrated client care is based on a collaborative, problem-solving approach among the three departments, which does not require the creation of a new Health Agency. In fact, we believe that if the Board directed the three departments and the CEO's Interim Office of Health Care Integration to come back in six months with a Strategic Plan for Integrated Care, the talented and committed leadership of the departments and the CEO's office would certainly be able to successfully do so.

The Draft Report itself acknowledges the fact that there are currently outstanding models of integrated care that exist today. We believe that instead of focusing the County's efforts on the creation of a new Health Agency, clients would be better served by the implementation of such a Strategic Plan, which would identify ways to best replicate these successful models while overcoming any current barriers.

The County Department of Public Health has, since its independence in 2006, become a nationwide leader in the public health arena, producing outstanding outcomes in protecting the public health of the County's more than 10 million residents. We believe that its growing scope of critically important responsibilities -- with our County residents facing growing public health threats in the aftermath of 9/11, and with growing environmental threats and threats of new infectious diseases such as SARS and the pandemic flu -- requires maximum visibility and attention outside the shadow of a new Health Agency.

Similarly, throughout the past several decades, the County Department of Mental Health has built an expansive model of community-based recovery oriented services that is the envy of other counties in this State, has organized a stakeholder process that is unmatched, and has found ways to maintain the key elements of its system amidst rising expectations from all age groups, all while making a big dent in reducing disparities and integrating cultural competency into its culture and services. Like public health, mental health deserves to continue to stay outside the shadow of a new Health Agency.

Additionally of concern, the proposed Health Agency model would have the heads of the Departments of Health, Mental Health, and Public Health reporting to the head of the Health Agency, rather than directly to the Board of Supervisors. If the Director of the Department of Health were to be named the Health Agency Director, as is implied in the Draft Report, the Departments of Mental Health and Public Health would soon be the only two County Departments not run by elected officials whose Directors would not be reporting directly to the Board of Supervisors. This model is unacceptable.

Instead, we strongly believe that Public Health and Mental Health should continue to have the same autonomy, voice, and presence in the County as the other County Departments in being able to report directly to the Board. At the same time, we support a model that would be consistent with the Board's recent unanimous decision to go back to its old CAO governance structure, which retains departmental collaboration and interdepartmental communication while reducing bureaucracy.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that the Board of Supervisors support a collaborative, problem-solving approach to better integrated client care which does not require the creation of a new Health Agency, while at the same time allowing for the continued autonomy of each of the three departments and ensuring that mental health and public health continue as equity partners which report directly to the Board.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Your Name
Title

c: _____, Title (Health Deputy)
_____, Title, (Mental Health)