

March 2, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California  
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Behavioral Health Task Force

Dear Governor Newsom;

Mental Health of America California (MHAC), founded in 1957, is the state's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of individuals living with mental health challenges and substance use disorders. With eight chapters across the State, MHAC advocates to promote behavioral health as a critical part of overall wellness.

Mental Health America of California is disappointed in the composition of the newly established Governor's Behavioral Health Task Force. It appears from the information released on February 26, 2020, there is no appointment representing people with lived experiences. We believe this to be a major oversight. We believe this omission is significant. The press release, dated January 21, 2020, states the task force *"will consist of a broad range of stakeholders, including people living with behavioral health conditions—including mental health and substance use disorders..."*

Clearly, people with lived experiences are of great value in this type of effort. We strongly believe the design and implementation of any reforms made to the public mental health system needs to engage clients and their families in the process. Moreover, suggested reforms should demonstrate the inclusion of client contributions and respect for client choices. We trust this oversight will be corrected and individuals with lived experience will join the Behavioral Health Task Force.

Respectfully,



Heidi Strunk  
President and CEO

Cc: Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary California Health and Human Services Agency and Chair of the Behavioral Health Task Force.