

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

When: Tuesday, May 6th, 2014

Where: Kenneth Hahn, Hall of Administration

500 W. Temple St, Ste 383

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Who: Peter Eliasberg Legal Director ACLU of Southern California
Patisse Cullors Executive Director Dignity and Power Now and CURB member

Kristina Ronnquist MSW student-worked inside of Century Regional Detention Facility (Psychiatric floors)

Brittney Weissman, Executive Director, NAMI LACC

Dr. Jon Sherin, Chief Medical Officer Volunteers of America

What: Press Conference: Tuesday, May 6th, 2014, 10:00am-10:30am
Advocacy Groups and Service Providers say No 2.3 Billion Dollar Jail Plan

(Los Angeles)—Advocacy groups from across Los Angeles County are saying no to the proposed \$2.3 billion dollar jail plan that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor's will consider on May 6th.

Advocacy groups and service providers believe the Board of Supervisors would be making a huge mistake if they move forward on a costly jail plan.

For nearly two decades, Los Angeles officials have failed to address the needs of individuals with mental illness housed in the county jails.

In 1997 The U.S. Department of Justice toured and took detailed accounts of the civil rights violations taking place in the jail system; including inadequate screening, ineffective and negligent treatment protocols, ineffective suicide prevention/intervention, as well as physical and verbal abuse of the mentally ill inmates. In 2002, the County of Los Angeles and the Department of Justice entered into a Memorandum of Agreement designed to address the problems the Department of Justice had detailed in 1997. Yet, in the following years, numerous reports, including a report by the Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence in 2012 detailed significant problems with the treatment of inmates with mental

illness, including the use of excessive force by deputies against inmates. Then, late last year the justice department launched a new probe into the county's treatment of mentally ill inmates.

The county has responded by reviewing a proposal for a new jail which will do little to fix the concerns identified by justice department, or those that advocacy groups, mental health experts, judges and members of the community have been calling attention to for decades.

A new jail won't prevent suicides. A new jail won't ensure that county health officials provide proper diagnosis and treatment of mentally ill inmates. And a new jail won't curb excessive use of force by Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies against mentally ill inmates.

Members of the community and advocacy groups stand together in demanding that the county invest in a more comprehensive plan to divert those with mental health conditions to professional mental health providers and services.

Furthermore, it is unfair to saddle a new sheriff with a bad plan. The supervisors should stop and consider a full array of solutions, including diversion programs that can improve public safety, reduce jail crowding, and are far less expensive than a \$2.3 billion jail.