

NAMI Members Urged to Sign Laura's Law Petition

A group of concerned NAMI members and other mental health advocates in San Diego County have launched a campaign to petition County supervisors to implement Laura's Law in San Diego. A petition has been drafted and can be signed online at:

www.ipetitions.com/petition/lauraslawsandiegocounty

“There have been a rash of possibly avoidable deaths, serious injuries and incarcerations involving seriously mentally ill people who have refused treatment and whose parents and family members have been unable to get help or needed treatment,” says Eric Revere, San Diego County Mental Health Board member. Laura's Law, passed by the California legislature in 2002, but whose implementation in each county must be passed by a resolution of the county supervisors, will enable mandated assisted outpatient treatment for those who have a history of non-compliance to include hospitalization, incarceration and homelessness. Revere further states, “This law will protect the rights of those individuals who have no insight into their own illnesses, but will save lives and help protect the public safety of all citizens of our community. All citizens of San Diego County are urged to sign this petition.”

Petition

To: San Diego County Supervisors Greg Cox, Bill Horn, Diane Jacob, Ron Roberts, Pam Slater-Price

From: The Undersigned Citizens of San Diego County

We, the undersigned citizens of San Diego County, hereby petition you, the supervisors of San Diego County, to pass a resolution implementing Laura's Law in our county.

Laura's Law (AB 1421) was passed by the California legislature in 2002 and patterned after Kendra's Law of New York. However, its implementation is not mandatory and can only be adopted by a resolution of each county's board of supervisors. Kendra's Law or similar legislation has been successfully adopted by several other states and counties throughout the US. Laura's Law is assisted outpatient treatment, sustained and mandated for those in the community most overcome by the symptoms of severe mental illness, and for those for whom current voluntary services have not worked. By providing assisted outpatient treatment, Laura's Law will create an effective tool for people with severe mental illnesses like schizophrenia to get help before they become a danger to themselves or others. It will help stop the violence committed upon them or by them. It will stop the revolving door that spins too many people in and out of hospital emergency rooms, jails, and living on the streets of our county. It will save our county and the US taxpayers from continuing to shoulder the costs of these least effective options. It will protect the rights and the safety of our citizens, especially the 40-50% of those with serious mental illnesses who have no insight into their own illness and refuse the very treatment that could help them. Individual rights are fully protected under this law as the treatment recipient must meet comprehensive criteria before mandated treatment can be ordered.

We believe that Laura's Law can be implemented in our county without diminishing funds for existing mental health programs. The San Diego Mental Health Court Calendar and Assertive Community Treatment are two programs funded by the Mental Health Services Act and now in place to support implementation.

We urge you, our supervisors, to help prevent so much needless suffering of innocent people by enabling these seriously mentally ill citizens to receive the beneficial treatment they need. Laura's Law will bring real treatment to people who need it most.