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ADVANCING BRAIN HEALTH POLICY & INSPIRING LEADERSHIP

August 21, 2018

Dear Honorable MHSOAC Commissioners,

We are thrilled that you are moving forward with a fellowship program that will open new opportunities for Commission board members and staff to collaborate and communicate with mental health consumers and professionals. The program is a testament to your commitment to highlighting the value of lived experience and state-of-the-art treatment practices as you work to shape and oversee mental health policy in California.

We would like to suggest that these promising new fellowships be named in honor of two distinctive icons who have dedicated their lives to fighting for better services, opportunities, and outcomes for people living with mental illness. We respectfully request the consumer fellowship be named after Sally Zinman; and the practitioner fellowship in honor of Rusty Selix.

Sally has served as a bright and unwavering beacon for the mental health consumer movement. Over more than three decades of activism, she has been a humble but eloquent voice for self-empowerment and self-determination for people living with a brain illness. She has helped elevate and redefine the concept of recovery and planted the seeds for the peer-run programs now flourishing nationwide.

Sally helped launch the nation's first statewide consumer-run organization in the 1970s. Today, as executive director of the California Association of Mental Health Peer-Run Organizations, she remains a potent force, working to shatter stigma, promote a community-based approach to mental wellness, and upholding the civil rights of people living with mental illness.

Rusty was co-author of the Mental Health Services Act, the historic 2004 legislation that has transformed the landscape for mental health treatment in California. For more than three decades, he served as executive director of the California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies, working to forge a more effective and responsive mental health delivery system. He has been a strong and persistent voice for destigmatizing brain illness and building a robust continuum of care on par with the system in place for physical illness. Rusty was an early champion of the need to bend the treatment curve toward prevention and intervention, front-end treatment that breaks the cycle of despair that too often accompanies untreated mental

illness. Quite frankly, California's mental health care system would not be where it is without his unrelenting advocacy.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and stand ready to help in any way.

In Partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M. Merritt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maggie Merritt
Executive Director