January 30th, 2018

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors  
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 W Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Support of Item 8 — County Sponsored Legislation – Grave Disability

Supervisors,

Before I became Councilmember for the 4th District of the City of Los Angeles, I served as a Director at one of Los Angeles’s largest non-profit mental health care providers: Kedren Acute Psychiatric Hospital and Community Health Center. I know first-hand the difficulty of balancing the health needs of individuals and their personal rights. There is no perfect answer, but at this moment, we clearly are in need of additional tools for medical professionals to provide mental health treatment to those who need it, even if those individuals are not always aware of their mental health needs or willing to accept help.

These are the difficult discussions we must engage in if we are going to humanely address our homelessness and mental health crisis. This is why I directed members of my office to participate in the community stakeholder sessions requested by your Board to “examine current methods of engagement, delivery of services, and related laws to empower the County to care for the gravely disabled.” I believe the Department of Mental Health recommendation stemming from your October 31, 2017 direction to seek state legislation to amend the definition of gravely disabled to include when a person is “unable to provide for his or her basic personal needs for food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment where the lack or failure of such treatment results in substantial physical harm or death” is a necessary one.

I therefore fully support the motion on today’s agenda by Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Mark Ridley-Thomas to direct the Chief Executive Officer to work with the Director of the Department of Mental Health to immediately sponsor legislation that would amend the definition of gravely disabled.

Sincerely,

David E. Ryu
Councilmember, District 4