



## TRI-CITY HEALTHCARE DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

4002 Vista Way, Oceanside, CA 92056  
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BOARD MEMBER

June 18, 2019

Mr. Nathan Fletcher  
Supervisor, Fourth District  
San Diego County Board of Supervisors

Ms. Tasha Boerner Horvath  
California State Assemblymember  
76<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

Dear Mr. Fletcher and Ms. Boerner Horvath:

Tri-City Healthcare District is in receipt of your June 10, 2019 letter addressed to Mr. Steve Dietlin, Tri-City Healthcare District CEO. As the Chairperson of the Tri-City Healthcare District Board of Directors I have grave concerns about your lack of understanding of Tri-City Healthcare District's continued commitment to long-term, sustainable, community-based solutions to help meet the health care needs of North County. Perhaps more concerning is the depth of inaccuracies included in your communication. Since the suspension of Tri-City's Behavior Health Unit (BHU) and Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) we have been working diligently with Supervisor Jim Desmond and Supervisor Kristin Gaspar in an effort to assist the County of San Diego to meet its behavioral health obligations.

Your personal demand for a comprehensive plan is unwarranted given discussions are ongoing, and such information is available by simply walking across the hallway of your office and discussing the matter with one of your fellow Supervisors who have actually been involved in forging possible solutions. Your threatened "legislative action" and "state audit" calls into question whether such efforts are an abuse of power. These intimidation tactics are not appreciated, respected, or warranted. Mr. Fletcher, it is well known that your spouse serves in the California State Assembly, representing South San Diego County, and you, Ms. Boerner Horvath, are serving your first term in the California State Assembly. It's unconscionable to receive a letter from two elected officials, a County Supervisor representing South County and a California State Assembly member, threatening legislative action against a North County local healthcare district. Is this the assistance you are referring to in your letter from County and State officials? It is inexcusable you would abuse your political power in such a manner.

The San Diego Grand Jury has already investigated the suspension of both of our units. The Grand Jury Report clearly reflected the mental health crisis was not the responsibility of Tri-City Healthcare District. On the contrary, the report stated "the real problem was not limited to psychiatric beds or to one hospital, but was, in fact, county-wide." The Grand Jury also placed the responsibility for delivering an action plan on the shoulders of the County of San Diego, specifically the Chief Administrative Officer, requiring the County's response within 90 days to the presiding judge. As a positive note, the report offers the County of San Diego findings and recommendations for improving the county mental health continuum.

Your letter compared the capital improvements needed in Tri-City's suspended BHU and CSU units to the upgrades recently made to the "San Diego Psychological Hospital." Comparing the Psychiatric Hospital of San Diego County with our medical center is like

comparing an orange to a banana; both are very different facilities and the comparison is incommensurable. The Joint Commission surveyed Tri-City one week prior to suspension of our BHU and CSU services, and cited the environment of care risks in those units as “high and widespread” as expected, but determined that a future validation survey was unnecessary, noting that Tri-City’s actions to mitigate risks and suspend services were appropriate. In case you are unaware, The Joint Commission is the gold standard in healthcare. It was unfortunate Tri-City was faced with a decision to suspend operations of the BHU and CSU to comply with new federal patient safety standards or put our entire healthcare continuum at risk. Tri-City puts patient safety and our community first and would make the same decision today if faced with an identical situation.

Throughout this entire process, Tri-City has been transparent and realizes difficult decisions for the benefit of the overall community require a collaborative effort. We have consistently reached out to law enforcement, fire, EMS, PERT, and other impacted community stakeholders, and will continue to do so. It is important to note that San Diego County data has reported there is approximately one patient on average from the Tri-City Healthcare District admitted to an inpatient mental health facility in the entire county per day. To place the blame on our small healthcare district for the shortcomings of the County is not only unfair but comes with questionable motives.

It is exciting to hear the County of San Diego has allocated \$708.5 million dollars toward mental health services in 2020. During multiple conversations with key County leaders we have discussed providing use of valuable District property for building new mental health facilities on our campus. We have suggested the County allocate \$14 million of those funds to build a \$4 million Crisis Stabilization Unit and a \$10 million, sixteen-bed inpatient psychiatric facility on District land. This is just one of the options discussed with the Supervisors working on this project. Tri-City understands the increased time sensitivity in North County, considering Palomar Health’s planned closure of its twenty-two bed acute mental health unit. Supervisor Desmond and Supervisor Gaspar have diligently been working with North County healthcare leaders to find a long term sustainable solution, and we have made great progress; however, we have not received the “multiple offers of assistance” you suggested. It is important to note there has yet to be a County or State approved offer of assistance presented to the District.

Tri-City has not abandoned our community or our commitment to long term, sustainable, community solutions to meet its health care needs. Quite the opposite is true. Tri-City continues to provide extensive outpatient mental health services where we see approximately 50 patients per day. Tri-City also provides psychiatric liaisons and tele-mental health psychiatric services for our Emergency Department and inpatients. We also continue to appropriately treat each patient presenting in our Emergency Department. Tri-City exists to serve our community every second of every day. Your suggestion of abandonment is absolutely offensive, unwarranted, and not true.

On multiple occasions Tri-City has invited you, along with other elected officials, to discuss important community services to meet the health care needs of North County. We are pleased many elected officials accepted our invitation, resulting in positive, collaborative meetings. Unfortunately, you haven’t accepted our numerous invitations to discuss behavioral health, or tour our facility. It’s disappointing you would issue a letter with demands, threats, accusations, and false statements prior to discussing facts, circumstances, challenges, and the potential for collaboration.

It’s incomprehensible that legislative action would be threatened prior to an actual discussion, or visit to Tri-City, to fully understand the circumstances and ongoing efforts to establish a collaborative regional plan. As mentioned previously, we have been working with County Supervisors Jim Desmond and Kristin Gaspar who both appear to have the communities’ best interest at heart.

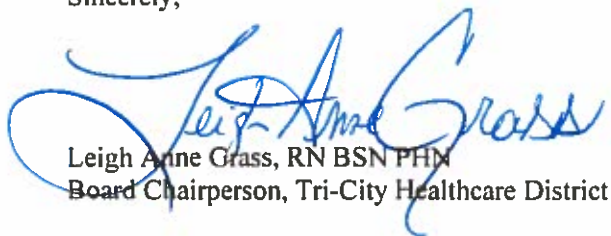
The timing of your letter, one day prior to a meeting with the County Supervisors, County Health and Human Services Agency representatives, and another North County healthcare provider, is of particular

Supervisor Fletcher | Assemblymember Boerner Horvath  
June 18, 2019


concern, as it had the potential to derail progress towards solidifying the framework of a coordinated plan for the benefit of our North County community.


If you pursue the threatened legislative action and a state audit, it will add substantial cost and resource burdens to State, County and Local Agencies. While we are confident findings will support the decision to suspend the BHU and CSU, just as confirmed by The Joint Commission, it will undoubtedly create a drain on valuable community resources and divert focus from our core mission, which is to “advance the health and wellness of the community we serve.” The Community deserves better from elected officials. The needs of our patients must be prioritized over politics or political antics. Tri-City believes in a positive, collaborative approach to solutions and will continue to pursue a sustainable regional plan that meets the needs of our District.


Sincerely,




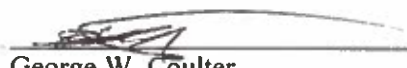
Leigh Anne Grass, RN BSN PHM  
Board Chairperson, Tri-City Healthcare District

  
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Board Vice-Chairperson  
Tri-City Healthcare District

  
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Board Secretary  
Tri-City Healthcare District

  
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Board Treasurer  
Tri-City Healthcare District

  
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Rocky J. Chavez  
Board Asst. Secretary  
Tri-City Healthcare District

  
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George W. Coulter  
Board Asst. Treasurer  
Tri-City Healthcare District

*Tracy M. Younger* (e-signature)  
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Tracy M. Younger  
Board Member  
Tri-City Healthcare District

Supervisor Fletcher | Assemblymember Boerner Horvath  
June 18, 2019

CC: Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon  
Senate Pro Tem Toni Atkins  
Senator Pat Bates, 36<sup>th</sup> District, California Senate  
Chair Dianne Jacob, 2<sup>nd</sup> District, County of San Diego  
Vice Chair Greg Cox, 1<sup>st</sup> District, County of San Diego  
Supervisor Kristin Gaspar, 3<sup>rd</sup> District, County of San Diego  
Supervisor Jim Desmond, 5<sup>th</sup> District, County of San Diego  
Helen Robbins-Meyer, CAO, County of San Diego  
Nick Macchione, Director, Health and Human Services Agency, County of San Diego  
Dr. Nick Yphantides, CMO, Health and Human Services Agency, County of San Diego  
Dr. Luke Bergmann, Director, Behavioral Health, County of San Diego  
Dimitrios Alexiou, CEO, Hospital Association of San Diego and Imperial Counties