



Legislation Text

File #: 20-138, Version: 1

Approve the appointments of Lesli Caldwell Houston and Danny Cotton to the Mental Health Advisory Board for terms to expire on February 24, 2023

Published Notice Required? Yes ☐ No ☒
Public Hearing Required? Yes ☐ No ☒

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION:

The Department of Health and Social Services (H&SS) recommends that the Board of Supervisors approve the appointments of Lesli Caldwell Houston and Danny Cotton to the Mental Health Advisory Board for terms to expire on February 24, 2023.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

Welfare and Institutions code section 5604-5604.5 specifies that the Board of Supervisors of each county shall appoint a Mental Health Advisory Board (MHAB) to provide input and feedback to the County Mental Health Director. The MHAB must include individuals who have experience with and knowledge of the mental health system. The board membership should also reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the client population in the county. At least 20% of the membership must be a person with lived experience as a recipient of mental health services, and at least 20% must be a family member of an individual who is receiving or has received mental health services, to assure that different viewpoints are present.

The Solano County MHAB has been in existence since August 11, 1977, and currently maintains an active and diverse six-member roster, including one position filled by a member of the Board of Supervisors, currently Supervisor Brown. The MHAB is striving to achieve a membership of at least ten interested participants. This appointment will increase the membership to eight individuals. As required in the bylaws to affirm their commitment, both applicants have attended at least two board meetings as a member of the public. They have been interviewed and accepted by the membership committee.

Ms. Houston is a retired career Public Defender, most recently serving as the Public Defender for Solano County. In this capacity, she has been an advocate for defendants with mental health issues and believes that people with mental illness usually require treatment rather than incarceration. Her family history includes individuals living with mental illness, and she carries a personal passion for this advocacy. As someone informed on the law, she will be able to contribute a deep understanding of legislation that affects mental health policy. She is also knowledgeable on County practices consistent with the Stepping Up Initiative adopted by the Board of Supervisors. She will be in a Family Member seat based upon her lived experience.

Mr. Cotton views himself as a re-entry advocate for those coming out of incarceration. He currently serves as manager for Clean & Sober Living Partnership, a sober living environment. In this capacity he advocates for individuals with substance use disorders to maintain their recovery and assists with their housing. He will be in a Community Member seat.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

These appointments have no fiscal impact on the County General Fund. The costs of preparing this report are nominal and absorbed by the department's FY2019/20 Adopted Budget.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Board may choose not to approve these appointments. This is not recommended, as the MHAB has several vacancies needing to be filled, and continued vacancies will impact the Advisory Board's ability to effectively function. Both candidates have been interviewed and recommended by MHAB.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

There are no other involved agencies.

CAO RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION