

Renay Bradley

I am the former Director of Research and Evaluation at the OAC, but I'm here today as a psychologist, a family member, and a concerned member of the public. I testified at the last hearing that the LHC held on this topic. Since then, I decided to leave my position at the OAC, largely because, as the current executive director, Toby Ewing, came on, it became clear that the Commission has little intention to carry out many of its statutory roles, including oversight of the MHSA.

The issue here is quite simple. The MHSA was intended to have an oversight body. The OAC—the entity with statutory authority to provide this oversight—has not only carried out this role poorly and in some instances simply not done it, over the last year, they have actively taken steps to undermine their own ability to provide oversight. Here's an example.

Rather than implementing the PEI and INN regulations and providing counties with the support that the Commission promised to provide—support designed to help counties collect and share data that would enable the state to evaluate these components—the MHSOAC directed staff to stop providing technical assistance to counties; they stopped plans for staff to develop a means through which the counties could submit data to the OAC. Toby notes in his testimony that they are taking time now to “document concerns”. There is no need to do this. Concerns raised by the counties were documented when the regulations were being established. Strategies to overcome those concerns were also identified; in some cases implementation had already begun. Toby put a stop to all of that. I don't believe the Commission has any intention for the regulations to succeed, which means we will continue to lack the information needed to provide proper oversight of these components.

Similarly, Toby reports that the OAC is working to improve its evaluation strategies and has begun “policy research projects”. Unfortunately, there is no actual research or evaluation involved in these projects, and they are not structured to actually provide oversight. He directed staff to stop implementation of the Commission's Evaluation Master Plan, which the Commission received additional resources from the legislature to carry out in 2013. What he and the Commission are currently proposing to do with evaluation resources will only further obfuscate the truth.

Unfortunately, there are individuals and entities out there that would like this to continue. Of course, those who are not abiding by the law do not want to strengthen oversight that could call out illegalities; those who are not performing adequately do not want to be called out for their inability to achieve intended outcomes. Under the direction of the current executive director and with the blessing of many of the commissioners, the OAC is condoning and supporting such unlawfulness and underperformance, which, in my opinion, is also unlawful, given their statutory charge.

Toby's testimony about the workgroup that was established to consider whether the OAC should review PEI plans is a good example of his masterful ability to redirect attention away from the issue at hand so that he can make it appear as though your recommendations are being addressed (even though they are not). You will note through his own admission that the focus of those meetings remained on the Community Planning Process rather than PEI. Similarly, a new website was recently developed, but the information on it is just recycled from the old website. Nothing new is included. Again, it is all smoke and

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mirrors intended to hide the fact that oversight is not being provided. The OAC in its current form clearly has no intention to have more “teeth” or ability to actually provide oversight of the MHSA.

We know that MHSA funds are not consistently being spent appropriately. We know that there are millions of MHSA dollars sitting out there not being spent at all, while Californians remain unserved. And we know that the oversight body that should be addressing these problems is turning a blind eye and in some cases sabotaging its own ability to provide proper oversight.

Enough is enough! If the OAC in its current form does not intend to provide oversight, then we need to find another way to make this happen, as was intended by the initial proposition and the voters of our state. Thank you.