



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

TODD GLORIA
MAYOR

November 29, 2023

Honorable Chair Nora Vargas
Board of Supervisors
San Diego County
1600 Pacific Highway, Room 335
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: Opposition to Delay of SB 43 to January 1, 2025

Dear Chair Vargas:

As Mayor of the City of San Diego, I am writing to urge the County of San Diego to implement Senate Bill 43 (SB 43) when it goes into effect on January 1, 2024 and not delay to January 1, 2025.

SB 43 was signed into law earlier this year and provides the first major update to the State's conservatorship laws in decades. It extends this life saving intervention to people with severe substance use disorders and those who cannot provide for their own basic personal safety or medical needs. This legislation helps counties deliver critical public safety and public health services to the most vulnerable people in our communities, promotes safer neighborhoods, and is necessary to connect those with severe behavioral health challenges to treatment.

While the law allows for counties to delay implementation until 2026, our County is experiencing an unacceptable behavioral health crisis – one all of us see clearly every day in our communities.

Last year, the City of San Diego's police officers and fire fighters spent over 130,000 hours responding to over 53,000 behavioral health related emergency calls. This equates to 38 first responders spending their entire 10 hour shifts every day responding to behavioral health emergencies in my city alone. Many of these individuals are frequent high utilizers of emergency services, cycling from the streets, emergency rooms, and jails. It is inhumane to allow this to continue and this issue demands action, not delay.

Under SB 43, the County has expanded authority to step in and save lives by providing treatment when people are so sick that they cannot meet their own basic needs to preserve their safety. The expanded authorities in SB 43 begins the necessary work of breaking down discriminatory policies that deny people with addiction issues the same healthcare opportunities as those with mental illness. Accidental overdose continues to be the number one cause of death for people in our County, with over 1,300 lives lost in 2022 alone. Overdose is also the number one cause of death for people experiencing homelessness, and we know a disproportionate number of people on the streets suffer from mental illness, addiction, or often times both. Putting implementation off will cost people their lives, and is an abdication of the County's responsibility to provide the critical mental health services to the most vulnerable in our communities.

SB 43 presents another opportunity to lead California's progress on behavioral health. San Diego is included in the initial cohort of CARE Act implementation, leading a new approach delivering mental health treatment. The City and County of San Francisco issued an executive order in October directing their staff to work on policies to implement SB 43, including developing an action plan with solutions to address infrastructure needs, streamlining the referral process, and promoting information sharing and data reporting. San Diego County should follow suit.

I respectfully ask for the County to not delay SB 43 implementation and to work with cities and other public safety and health partners to expand services to those that need them the most. Our communities expect us to take action now to address the challenges of metal health, addiction and homelessness. I look forward to our continued partnership in taking on these challenges together.

Sincerely,



TODD GLORIA
Mayor
City of San Diego

CC: Vice Chair Terra Lawson-Remer
Supervisor Joel Anderson
Supervisor Jim Desmond
Supervisor Elect Monica Montgomery Steppe
Helen Robbins Meyer, Chief Administrative Officer
Dr. Eric McDonald, Interim Health and Human Services Agency Director