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October 23, 2014

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Ms. Monica Wilson, Chair  
California Mental Health Planning Council (CMHPC)  
P.O. Box 997413  
Sacramento, CA 95899-7413

Dear Chair Wilson,

On behalf of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC), I would like to convey the Commission's enthusiastic support for your efforts to move forward with discussions about a statewide certification process for peer service providers that includes clients, family members, parents and/or caregivers.

Your intent to develop a road map that will identify necessary next steps to implement Peer Certification in California is a critical step necessary to move this vital issue forward. The MHSOAC applauds the California Mental Health Planning Council for initiating this process and including the various state partners necessary to make this a reality.

We know that the inclusion of persons with lived experience working at all levels in the public mental health system can be critical in helping persons with mental illness move toward recovery. To date, the Commission has conducted Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Community Forums throughout California that have involved close to 2,000 participants. When asked about the most effective service strategies to come out of the MHSA, the availability of peer service providers is consistently identified.

A priority identified in the MHSOAC's 2014 Work Plan is to exercise an active role in policy development, including endorsing and promoting strategies that will positively transform California's public mental health system. Consistent with the 2014 Work Plan, the MHSOAC's Client and Family Leadership Committee (CFLC) is charged with the development of strategies for promotion of client and family member employment in the mental health system. These strategies must include efforts aimed at identifying barriers within the civil service hiring process and should include active dialogue with labor unions. Furthermore, these transformative strategies must not limit individuals to one career path, must instead build a career lattice so that individuals have multiple opportunities to pursue. The MHSOAC views statewide certification for Peer Specialists as a transformative opportunity that will improve the care, services and outcomes for persons with mental illness.

The Commission will continue to support these efforts through discussion and participation with other essential partners in the Planning Council's process to identify the steps necessary to implement statewide Peer Certification. The Commission also looks forward to a discussion about the various roles each entity might play in the design,

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implementation and administration of a statewide Peer Certification process for persons with lived experience of mental illness.

Again, we thank you for your willingness to facilitate complicated discussions about what it will take to accomplish statewide Peer Certification. We know that the successful implementation of such a statewide process will improve individual and system outcomes for persons with mental illness by increasing opportunities for persons with lived experience of mental illness to provide peer support throughout California's mental health system.

Sincerely,

RICHARD VAN HORN,  
Chair  
Mental Health Services  
Oversight and Accountability Commission

cc: Sherri Gauger, Interim Executive Director, MHSOAC  
Jane Adcock, Executive Director, CMHPC  
Lupe Alonzo-Diaz, Deputy Director, Healthcare Workforce Development Division  
Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development  
Karen Baylor, Ph.D., Deputy Director, Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder  
Services, Department of Health Care Services  
MHSOAC's Client and Family Leadership Committee, Ralph Nelson, M.D., Chair;  
Tina Wooton, Vice Chair