

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Alondra Esquivel-Garcia, Director, Youth Commission

FROM: Brent Jalipa, Assistant Clerk
Homelessness and Behavioral Health Select Committee

DATE: November 22, 2023

SUBJECT: PROPOSED RESOLUTION INTRODUCED

The Board of Supervisors' Homelessness and Behavioral Health Select Committee has received the following proposed Resolution, introduced by Supervisor Hillary Ronen on October 31 2023. This item is being referred to the Youth Commission for comment and recommendation.

File No. 231140

Resolution urging the Mayor and Department of Human Resources (DHR) to initiate an emergency hiring plan with recruitment and retention incentives for behavioral healthcare workers to fill city employee vacancies and vacancies at city-contracted providers.

Please return this cover sheet with the Commission's response by email to:
Brent.Jalipa@sfgov.org.

RESPONSE FROM YOUTH COMMISSION **Date:** _____

_____ **No Comment**

_____ **Recommendation Attached**

Chairperson, Youth Commission

1 [Urging the Mayor and DHR to Initiate Emergency Hiring Plan to Fill Behavioral Health
2 Workforce Vacancies]

3 **Resolution urging the Mayor and Department of Human Resources (DHR) to initiate an**
4 **emergency hiring plan with recruitment and retention incentives for behavioral**
5 **healthcare workers to fill city employee vacancies and vacancies at city-contracted**
6 **providers.**

7
8 WHEREAS, San Francisco is experiencing a major behavioral health crisis with record
9 level accidental overdose deaths on track to be the deadliest year to date; and

10 WHEREAS, Between January and September of 2023, there have already been 620
11 accidental overdose deaths, while in 2022 there were a total of 649 accidental overdose
12 deaths, putting us on track to well surpass last year's staggering number of lives lost; and

13 WHEREAS, There is a growing workforce shortage crisis among behavioral health
14 professionals nationwide, a crisis exacerbated in San Francisco by unlivable wages,
15 exorbitant costs of living, non-competitive benefit programs, and a lack of robust recruitment
16 and retention programs; and

17 WHEREAS, The success of the Behavioral Health system of care is limited by the large
18 number of staff vacancies throughout the system; and

19 WHEREAS, Behavioral health work is a high stress field that results in extensive staff
20 turnover; and

21 WHEREAS, High vacancies cause existing workers to take on substantial caseloads
22 that exacerbate burnout and turnover; and

23 WHEREAS, Some city-contracted providers in behavioral health services have
24 reported workforce vacancies as high as 40% due to an inability to compete with private
25 providers for salary and benefits; and

1 WHEREAS, Currently, the City's Department of Public Health has 144 vacancies within
2 Behavioral Health Services, including Jail Health Services' Behavioral Health team, and some
3 of these vacant positions have remained empty for multiple years; and

4 WHEREAS, Jail Health Services is by far the City's largest withdrawal management
5 program; and

6 WHEREAS, The job classifications impacted by the behavioral health workforce crisis
7 include registered nurses, nurse practitioners, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, behavioral
8 health clinicians, data analysts, case workers, and social workers; and,

9 WHEREAS, The lack of sufficient data analysts make it challenging to analyze the
10 success or lack of success of different treatment programs making it difficult for policy makers
11 to make effective decisions about allocating limited resources; and

12 WHEREAS, Although the scarcity of behavioral health resources is most noticeable in
13 the downtown core, other neighborhoods across San Francisco are experiencing an increase
14 in cases of individuals experiencing behavioral health and/or substance use disorder issues
15 with little to no support; and

16 WHEREAS, San Francisco has not implemented any recruitment or retention
17 incentives for behavioral healthcare workers to fill city employee vacancies nor vacancies at
18 city-contracted providers serving San Francisco in this field; and

19 WHEREAS, In the past two years, the City and County of San Francisco has greatly
20 prioritized increasing efforts to pay, recruit, and retain police officers; and

21 WHEREAS, In June 2022, The San Francisco Police Department budget was
22 increased by \$50,000,000 during the budget process; and

23 WHEREAS, In March 2023, the Board of Supervisors approved a budget supplemental
24 appropriating an additional \$25,000,000 to fund police overtime costs in an attempt to
25 maintain current staffing levels; and

1 WHEREAS, In April 2023, the Police Officers Association (POA) advocated for pay
2 raises and added retention bonuses at five, seven, and eight years of service to attract new
3 hires, and this Memorandum of Understanding was adopted between the POA and City
4 effective through June 2026; and

5 WHEREAS, In June 2023, the Police Department received another substantial
6 increase of \$63,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 and is slated to receive an additional
7 \$11,000,000 in the following fiscal year; and

8 WHEREAS, These expenditures have all been in service of recruiting more officers,
9 funding overtime, and paying for higher salaries; and

10 WHEREAS, In addition to unprecedented financial spending for the San Francisco
11 Police Department, the Mayor's Office has diverted responsibilities traditionally carried out by
12 medical professionals and social workers to the police department, including responding to
13 individuals experiencing mental and/or behavioral crises on our streets by arresting drug
14 users; and

15 WHEREAS, Despite massive expenditures into the Police Department, San Francisco
16 has not prioritized similar investments for the recruitment or retention of healthcare workers
17 who are especially skilled in responding to and treating mental and behavioral health crises;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, San Francisco has contracts to provide mental and behavioral health
20 services with more than 40 city-contracted providers, most of whom are experiencing the
21 same recruitment, retention, chronic underfunding and staffing issues as the San Francisco
22 Police Department; and

23 WHEREAS, Mental and behavioral healthcare workers do not receive the same
24 benefits as police officers, especially overtime pay; and

1 WHEREAS, Despite recognizing that we have a mental and behavioral health crisis on
2 our streets, the Mayor's Office has prioritized criminalizing those who are suffering from
3 mental health and behavioral health issues, especially those suffering from substance use
4 disorder, and has continued the unsuccessful cycle of attempting to address a public health
5 issue by criminalizing an illness; now, therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Mayor's Office and the
7 Department of Human Resources to urgently implement a recruitment and hiring plan to fill
8 vacancies at the Department of Public Health, Jail Health Services, and with the city-
9 contracted providers serving San Francisco to address the mental health and addiction crises;
10 and, be it

11 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Mayor's Office and
12 the Department of Human Resources to urgently implement a retention plan to address the
13 extensive burnout and turnover within the mental and behavioral health services field; and, be
14 it

15 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges that the Department of
16 Public Health, in assessing staffing for behavioral health services, take into account the needs
17 of neighborhoods across San Francisco for the goal of equitable access to services
18 geographically; and be it

19 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the adoption of a more
20 balanced approach to addressing the addiction and substance use disorder crisis by
21 recognizing that these disorders are primarily a mental, behavioral, and physical health issue,
22 as well as a public health crisis, and will never be solved through a primary law enforcement
23 and criminalization approach, which has been demonstrated to fail for decades.