



Dear Mayor, Members of the City Council, and City Manager:

At our June 9, 2021 and August 11, 2021 meetings, the Commission on Persons with Disabilities (CPD) discussed the unprecedented mental health crisis our nation is facing and how Alameda can help those impacted by using some of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds on mental health services, including wrap around services.

The toll of the pandemic has greatly increased the need for mental health services. One recent study documented that people are nearly three times more likely to experience symptoms of depression than they were before the pandemic began. Another study reported that two-thirds of unpaid caregivers say they are experiencing mental health challenges, and nearly 40% of the caregivers in that study reported having suicidal thoughts. These are just two of the numerous studies released this summer that point out the massive impact the pandemic has had on people's mental health.

Mental health treatment is an important part of mental health services, but to be effective mental health services must include wrap around services. Access to crisis services, substance misuse service, housing services, medical services, case management, and benefits counselors are all mental health services and integral to mental health treatment.

Mental health services have traditionally been the county's responsibility. However, earlier this year the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) found that Alameda County fails to provide services to qualified individuals with mental health disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public entities to provide community-based services to persons with disabilities when appropriate services can reasonably be provided to individuals who want them. However, the DOJ found that in Alameda County, hundreds of people are institutionalized because of the lack of community-based services, violating the rights of people with disabilities. In this time of crisis, the City of Alameda is not able to reasonably rely on Alameda County to make mental health services available to those who require them.

For these reasons, the CPD asks that the City Council act with **urgency** to improve the accessibility of mental health services by utilizing the ARPA funds.

Sincerely,

City of Alameda Commission on Persons with Disabilities