



CALIFORNIA NETWORK OF MENTAL HEALTH CLIENTS

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Dear Mental Health Commissioner:

The California Network of Mental Health Clients urges the selection of Commissioner Linford Gayle as Chair of the Mental Health Oversight and Accountability Commission.

Linford has emerged at this critical time as a true leader. We recall the first-ever convening of the Commission, when Linford spoke with compelling passion of the life experiences that he would draw from in his work on the Commission. He spoke frankly from the perspective of a person with mental health issues, an African-American, a gay man and a person who had experienced homelessness. He talked about the profound impact that stigma and discrimination had played in his own life. The dignity and significance of Linford's testimonial created a hush in the auditorium. Those of us who were present that day felt a sense of inspiration and awe that we were witnessing a historical moment, and that each of us had the chance to make a difference.

We mattered.

Since that day, Linford has served the Commission with integrity, plain-spoken honesty and remarkable leadership. He has challenged the system to step up and serve communities of color with respect and justice. He has been a passionate advocate against stigma and discrimination. And he has taken personal responsibility for making changes to the Commission's hearings that gave greater voice to clients and family members.

While we welcome the talents and contributions of all of the Mental Health Commissioners, Linford Gayle is what the Mental Health Services Act is all about. His leadership represents the difference between implementing a government program, and changing people's world. It matters.

We urge you to endorse Linford Gayle as Chair of the Commission.

Respectfully,

Laurel Mildred, MSW
Executive Director