

Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

21February2009

Dear Mr. President:

I am a family physician and psychiatrist in Sacramento County, California. For the past decade, I have devoted most of my practice to community health care. Like many counties, Sacramento is experiencing a financial crisis. The County is closing down most of their community mental health services on 30June2009. Eighty-eight hundred of our friends, neighbors, and family members with mental illness will no longer have access to care. Most will end up getting their care in crowded, expensive emergency rooms. Some will find their way to our single overcrowded and inhumane mental hospital. Many will end up getting care in hospitals, jails, and prisons after turning to street drugs to relieve their symptoms. All will suffer. Some will die.

I am writing to you because several of my colleagues and I have a solution. Not a potential solution, but a real solution that is in place and operating now. I was a telecommunications systems engineer for fifteen years before going to medical school, and as I started working in community health I developed a secure, web-based electronic medical record and administration system. Many devoted colleagues have lent their time, energy, and equipment to this totally volunteer effort. It has been deployed throughout the County, honed over the past nine years, operating under the radar of the administrators of the current moribund system. We will be deploying at our tenth clinic tomorrow. The technology currently helps doctors serve nearly 2,500 patients.

A friend who works at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention wrote me last week to say that she had been tasked with reviewing your economic stimulus package for the CDC. She was struck by the emphasis on innovative programs employing information technologies in the health care field, and felt that our proposal might merit consideration. We believe that an innovative community mental health program based on our technology could deliver humane psychiatric care to the citizens of our county for less than a third of what is currently being spent. Of course, Mr. President, we need help. An astonishingly small amount of money—perhaps \$120,000—would allow us to add some important features to the system and rapidly deploy it before the complete collapse of the existing programs. The operating budget would be a few million per year. It would save jobs, lives, and hearts. If one of your staff is able to turn their attention to our small but tragic story, our audacious proposal can be found at [www.sacdoc.org](http://www.sacdoc.org). I appreciate whatever time and attention you can spare.

Sincerely,



Ron Risley, MD

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