



Mental Health Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR
November 19, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Mental Health Commission
 Submitted by: Monica Jones, Chairperson, Mental Health Commission
 Subject: Appointment of Maria Sol and Ashley (Jiahao) Gu to the Mental Health Commission

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt two resolutions approving the recommendation for appointment of Maria Sol and Ashley (Jiahao) Gu to the Mental Health Commission both as representatives of the Special Interest Category, Consumer. Maria Sol's 3-year term will begin on November 20, 2024 and end on November 19, 2027. Ashley Gu's 3-year term will begin on November 20, 2024 and end on November 19, 2027.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

None.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Mental Health Commission is authorized to be composed of thirteen members. However, there are presently seven vacancies on the Commission. The Mental Health Commission is actively seeking candidates with the ability to fulfill the state law duties for Commissioners, including reviewing and evaluating the community's needs, services, facilities, and special problems.

Approval of the recommended action will fill two of the existing vacancies and allow the Commission to move one step closer to having a full and diverse complement of commissioners to review and evaluate the community's mental health needs, resources, and programs.

BACKGROUND

California State law requires that appointments to the Mental Health Commission meet specific categories, who may serve up to nine years consecutively. Maria Sol meets the category of special interest, consumer. The general public interest category may include anyone who has an interest in and some knowledge of mental health services. The special public interest category includes direct consumers of public mental health services and family members of consumers, which together must constitute at least fifty

percent or nine of the commission seats. Direct consumers and family members shall each constitute at least 20% of the commission membership.

The Mental Health Commission recommends Maria Sol as a representative of the special interest category, consumer appointment on the Mental Health Commission for the city of Berkeley for a three-year term. Maria has studied and majored in psychology and sociology providing services in the community, actively involved in human welfare, homeless prevention, mitigation and advocacy. Based on her opinion, the most important mental health issues in Berkeley are neglect, lack of support, prejudice and disparagement, alienation and trauma. She wants to help people see their potential and value, and connect with them by listening and providing real support.

Maria shares that she has personal direct lived experience. She has engaged with folks from coast to coast and has worked in state hospitals, shelters, programs for battered women, and focuses on advocacy for “maximum health and well-being.”

The Mental Health Commission passed the following motions at the September 26, 2024 meeting:

Interview and vote on nomination of Maria Sol to the Mental Health Commission:

M/S/C (Prichett, Opton) Motion that we move to recommend Maria Sol to the city council for the mental health commission.

PASSED

Ayes: Jones, Krishnan, Prichett, Opton, Turner Noes: None; Abstentions: None; Absent: Lunaparra

The Mental Health Commission recommends Ashley (Jiahao) Gu as a representative of the special interest category, consumer appointment on the Mental Health Commission for the city of Berkeley for a three-year term. Ashley is a first-generation Chinese immigrant who has witnessed and experienced the process of not only seeking mental health services but also overcoming her community’s sociocultural stigma around the subject. She is currently enrolled at UC Berkeley and has been a chapter leader and advisory board member for Bring Change 2 Mind, a nonprofit focused on youth mental health stigmatization, and a counselor for the California Youth Crisis Hotline, and she hopes to continue participating in this work through supporting the efforts of the Commission.

From Ashley’s perspective, the most important mental health issue in Berkeley is serving the unique needs of everyone on the broad socioeconomic and cultural spectrum. Another important issue she shared is that, within mental health services in the City of Berkeley, there is an apparent lack of streamlined access to urgent non-emergency mental health care. At UC Berkeley, for example, many students

report that it's difficult to book same day or next day appointments, an obstacle that once again discourages community members from seeking help.

Ashley's recommendation about what to do about issue in Berkeley is to start conducting data analysis and field studies within the city to identify different demographic groups, their levels of access to mental health services, their attitudes towards these services, and their preferred method of support in times of crisis. This would allow the city to create tailored advertisements towards these groups and to implement culturally sensitive tools and related training. Additionally, data points like these can help the city in pinpointing the specific issues hindering each socioeconomic group's access to care, from which the process for accessing care can be streamlined and resources to explain the process can be created.

Interview and vote on nomination of Ashley (Jiahao) Gu to the Mental Health Commission

M/S/C (Prichett, Turner) Motion that we move to recommend Ashley (Jiahao) Gu to the city council for the mental health commission.

PASSED

Ayes: Jones, Krishnan, Prichett, Opton, Turner Noes: None; Abstentions: None; Absent: Lunaparra

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

There are no identifiable environmental effects or opportunities associated with the subject of this report.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Approval of the recommended action will allow the Mental Health Commission to move one step closer to having a full and diverse complement of commissioners to review and evaluate the community's mental health needs, resources, and programs.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager concurs with the content and recommendations of the Commission's Report.

CONTACT PERSON

Jamie Works-Wright, Commission Secretary, HHCS, 510-981-7721

Attachments:

- 1: Resolution – Appointing Maria Sol
- 2: Resolution – Appointing Ashley (Jiahao) Gu

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

APPOINTMENT OF MARIA SOL TO THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION

WHEREAS, membership of the Mental Health Commission is composed of thirteen appointments by the City Council as a whole, including one appointment by the Mayor (*or designee*), six special public interest appointments, and four general public interest appointments; and

WHEREAS, with the ongoing implementation of the Mental Health Services Act, the City of Berkeley will need to have a full complement of diverse appointees to the Commission to review and evaluate the community's mental health needs, resources, and programs and to fulfill its mandate; and

WHEREAS, Maria Sol has studied and majored in psychology and sociology providing services in the community offering her lived experience; and

WHEREAS, The Mental Health Commission at its September 26, 2024 meeting recommended the appointment of Maria Sol.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the Council appoints Maria Sol as a representative of the Special Interest category, to complete her first term ending November 18, 2027.

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

APPOINTMENT OF ASHLEY GU TO THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION

WHEREAS, membership of the Mental Health Commission is composed of thirteen appointments by the City Council as a whole, including one appointment by the Mayor (*or designee*), six special public interest appointments, and four general public interest appointments; and

WHEREAS, with the ongoing implementation of the Mental Health Services Act, the City of Berkeley will need to have a full complement of diverse appointees to the Commission to review and evaluate the community's mental health needs, resources, and programs and to fulfill its mandate; and

WHEREAS, Ashley Gu is a first-generation Chinese immigrant who has lived experienced as a consumer and currently enrolled at UC Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, The Mental Health Commission at its September 26, 2024 meeting recommended the appointment of Ashley Gu.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the Council appoints Maria Sol as a representative of the Special Interest category, to complete her first term ending November 18, 2027.

