

Good morning,

My name is Verda Winona Pitts, and I am here today to talk about a serious issue—how Humboldt County's Department of Health and Human Services is managing its behavioral health funding.

Today, DHHS Director Connie Beck is asking for more money. But before we talk about increasing the budget, we need to ask: Where is the money they already receive going?

Humboldt County receives millions of dollars in state and federal funding to provide behavioral health services—services that should be supporting families, protecting children, and ensuring those in crisis receive the care they need. But instead of using these funds effectively, we see a system that routinely fails those it's supposed to help.

Children who have experienced trauma are being denied therapy. Mental health services are being weaponized against parents instead of used to keep families together. Rather than providing early intervention, resources are being used in ways that only worsen long-term outcomes.

And here's the reality: When we fail to support children early, we don't just create short-term harm—we set them up for a lifetime of struggle. We know from research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that untreated trauma in youth leads to greater needs later on—higher rates of mental illness, substance abuse, and even physical health issues. When kids don't get the care they need, they are far more likely to end up in foster care, juvenile detention, or even homeless as adults. That means more expensive interventions down the road, more strain on county resources, and ultimately, worse outcomes for everyone.

So, when DHHS asks for more money, we need to demand accountability. Why aren't these funds being used to prevent future crises? Why are therapy services being denied? Why is funding being funneled into bureaucratic waste rather than actual care?

Before we give Connie Beck and DHHS another dollar, we need transparency, oversight, and a commitment to spending behavioral health funds where they belong—on early intervention, family support, and real trauma-informed care. If we don't demand change now, we will only see these problems grow.

The people of Humboldt County deserve better. Our children deserve better. Let's make sure our funding is used to heal, not harm.

Thank you.