

December 23, 2010

Friends,

In 1993 when I accepted the job as Director of the Department of Mental Health, I thought I would stay 18 months. Now it has been 18 years and three administrations. I have decided it is my time to retire. This job has been the most challenging, complex and complicated position I have ever had, but it has also been the most fulfilling, enriching and best job I have ever had. Without it I would not have met so many incredible people, whose passion, commitment and perseverance has inspired me in so many ways. I now understand much better the challenges and barriers persons with mental illness face, be it stigma, discrimination, and/or lack of access. We have all promised to change these issues as our highest priority.

Those of us working in the California Mental Health Systems have developed a strong and powerful voice. We have empowered many people as we have fully embraced recovery and resilience. We are building a system around individuals and families, not the needs of the bureaucracy. I leave fully confident that this voice is resonant and will continue to be heard. I have always said mental health is about people. It is not high tech, and it is you all who make a difference on a daily basis.

I leave believing we are on track to have the best overall mental health system in the country. We have pockets of brilliance and innovation, and excellent treatment and results that give people back their lives. Skeptics always said California was too big to govern or change, but you have proven them wrong. Collaboration, persistence, patience and vision have paved the way. However, our system is not perfect; it is not even as good as it should be. Our challenge in the future is to redouble our efforts at collaboration, persistence, quality and accountability. Recovery is about hope, about faith, about vision and about building on our strengths. We can never lose sight of that.

I want to thank everyone of you for the support, the encouragement and the quest for excellence. Every day I see courage and resolve in you, our clients, in our families and in our providers. It has given me a strength for which I cannot thank you enough. I have been truly blessed and humbled by the opportunities given to me.

I will cherish and embrace these memories forever.

Fondly,

Steve Mayberg