**Sharifah Hardie is running for Long Beach City Council**

What are your views on mental health recovery?

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views with your organization, and all that you do!

**1.    What is more important for improving mental health currently, more locked facilities or more peer services? Please explain.**

As someone whose family has a history of mental illness this is a subject that is near & dear to my heart. I believe that locking up people with mental illness doesn't solve any problem. It doesn't make anything any easier or any better. It actually makes the entire situation so many times worse. Not only does the person have to do with their mental illness, but know they have to recover from the real time effects of having being locked up.

Most professionals agree that people with mental illness can lead productive lives as long as there are no stressors or triggers that occur to cause an episode. We have to be able to provide resources to allow people with mental illness to manage their lives and their illness.

**2.    What is your opinion on making it easier to conserve homeless people?**

I believe that homelessness can be eradicated. Most Americans these days are one paycheck, one accident, one illness away from being homeless. There is enough money, wealth and resources to greatly reduce this image. We have to be able to create jobs with a living wage that will allow people to take care of themselves.

**3.    Should people be forced to take psych medications against their will?**

I do not believe that people should be forced to take psych medications against their will, but I also believe that people who choose not to take the medications their Doctors prescribe should not be allowed to effect the lives of the people around them. People may need care-takers to manage their lives and assist them if they are unable to return to some form of "normalcy."

**4.    Do you think that the number of people incarcerated with mental health issues is an issue? If so, how would you address it?**

I believe that there are way too many people incarcerated period. It's so easy for us as a society to just lock people up and throw away the key. My focus is on rehabilitation. Unless a person believes or has the hope that they are able to lead a productive life they tend to return to the Devil they know. They don't see job opportunities, or any hope that things will be different. Once we criminalize them it's easier for people to just minimize them. Getting a job will be next to impossible. Keeping a steady roof over their heads is next to impossible. There is a cycle that's created, and we have to break the cycle by rehabilitating people instead of criminalizing them.

**5.    Currently it is possible to conserve someone in California on a limited conservatorship for life with the signature of one doctor. Should limited conservatorships be changed to require a doctor of the person’s choice or more than one doctor? Should limited conservatorships be reviewed on a regular basis, as LPS conservatorships are?**

I believe that limited conservatorships should require more than one doctors signature. I believe a team of doctors should review cases on an ongoing basis for patterns, and make recommendations to help the patient have a better quality of life. These recommendations should be continuously reviewed, and monitored closely. After all, that's really where all of us want to get to. Having a better quality of life.

**6.    Adult Protective Services is not allowed to take a complaint from a conserved person as technically that person has to be represented by their conservator in all affairs. Should the law be changed to allow people on conservatorships or others to report abuse perpetrated by conservators?**

Absolutely. When you take away a person's voice, no matter who they are, you allow abusers the ability to rein unchecked.

**7.     What is your opinion on Peer Certification in California that would set standards for mental health and substance abuse peer workers allowing the workers to bill Medi-Cal?**

I believe that is right thing to do. We are so quick to criminalize and less ready to heal patients. We have to take this as a medical approach. Yes, Medi-Cal needs to be able to cover more expenses than just what is considered the norm. We have to take care of all people, and not just with the issues we deem aren't our responsibility. We are just fine with helping people with diseases such as Cancer, Diabetes, etc. because we feel that those people didn't bring that on themselves. Whereas, people with substance abuse we judge them and say, "Nobody told them to take that drink. Nobody told them to smoke that dope." Then we turn our backs on people. We are to love and help all people free from judgement.

**8.    Self-help support groups are an essential tool to recovery in mental health and substance abuse as they reduce hospitalizations, medication needed, relapses, incarcerations and increase personal responsibility, healthy behaviors and employment. Would you require that each peer worker have knowledge of the dozens of free self-help support group programs in your district in order to be certified?**

Yes, I would. Why not want to know the available resources that can help people?

**9.    Do you agree that hospitals and other facilities should be required to video tape with sound all incidents of use of seclusion and restraint for psychiatric reasons, and provide the person who was secluded or restrained with a copy of the tape, upon request, in order to reduce the over use and abuse of these techniques?**

I believe that everything should be recorded. I don't necessarily believe that we should utilize resources to pull those tapes just to give them to patience. I believe, like other CCTV tapes they can be pulled if necessary, if a crime is suspected of being committed or with a subpoena. We want to utilize as much human resources as possible to the care of patience.

**10. How will you improve the employment services for people with mental health issues so that they are based on people’s skills and strengths rather than assuming the only jobs they can do are in food, janitorial, back office and landscaping?**

I have never heard nor assumed that people with mental issues can only do a certain type of jobs. I know high-functioning mentally ill people who have some amazing careers. I believe what slows people down from being able to obtain certain jobs is that those jobs don't allow you to just drop out of life for a few weeks and just return to work like nothing happened. Careers have people counting on you, other departments, certain expectations that other jobs may not have.

**11. There is an epidemic of depression at the moment. Loneliness is a major cause of depression and early death. Self-help support groups reduce loneliness. What steps will you take to reduce the number of people depressed?**

My focus is on creating jobs with a living wage, addressing homelessness and the lack of affordable housing. Many Americans are sad who would not consider themselves depressed. Depression is a system of the state of the people's feelings, mindset and emotions.  Take me for instance. I was laid off 8 times. I lost everything I owned but the clothes on my back. I have been divorced twice. Moved around a lot. I wouldn't consider myself depressed, but I can say that it was not the happiest time of my life. I believe that when people have more to be happy about, like you know, being able to feed their children or pay their rent or mortgage, you will see a decline in depression.

**12. Are you open to sober living and shared recovery housing as a way of increasing affordable housing in your district?**

Yes, I am.

**13. What are you doing to end homelessness?**

Ever since I built my first website in 1994, or when I wrote my book, "Signs You Might Be An Entrepreneur - How to Discover the Entrepreneur in You" I have focused on helping businesses and creating jobs with a living wage.

**14. How do you plan to reduce the stigma and discrimination against mental health consumers in your district?**

You reduce the stigma by reducing the amount of people who suffer from it. Over time more people will be able to see more people who have turned their lives around, and less people who are still depressed, sad, lonely, and suffering.

**15. Do you have any other positions that will make life better for mental health consumers, clients, survivors and others in recovery?**

What I stated above.

**16. Do you or anyone you know suffer from depression, anxiety, mood disorders, schizophrenia, addiction or other mental health diagnoses?**

Yes, I have family members that suffer or have suffered from mental health issues.

**17. What is your party affiliation?**

I am independent.

**18. Who have you received endorsements from?**

Nope. None. Nobody loves you. I'm too outspoken, or maybe I'm just too green to politics. I don't know, but I have none.

Sincerely,

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