

Re Applicant Marissa Squirrel Celeste (gm711)

My name is Gwen Lewis-Reid. I am a retired mental health staff and peer advocate of 21 years with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH). I was Assistant Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs where I mentored the Los Angeles County English, Asian, and Spanish coalitions (LACCCs), did regional trainings, and help coordinate annual Hope and Recovery, Empowering Our Lives conferences. I was also on loan to the California Network of Mental Health Clients (now California Association of Mental Health Peer Organizations -) in Sacramento for one year as Interim Director.

I am writing in support of Marissa Squirrel Celeste's application for inclusion on the above committee.

#### Motivation

Marissa is a mental health client with years of experience, who at this time is seeking to expand her role as a peer advocate to be able to help more persons diagnosed with mental health challenges in Hawaii.

#### Perceived Role

To be a contributing voice for her peers at the level where critical decisions are made.

#### Qualifications

I have known Marissa for at least 15 years. During that time, wherever she has lived, she has actively been engaged in peer advocacy work such as trainings at conferences, clubhouses, targeted groups, and working with individuals with a wide range of diagnoses. She is also knowledgeable of relevant recovery modalities.

With her life experience as a person with a co-occurring disorder (resolved), she would bring cache to the table.

As a person of Alaskan Indian descent, she would also add diversity to the discussion in a state with high diversity such as Hawaii.

#### Goals

She has expressed her desires to represent those persons diagnosed with mental health challenges based on her extensive life and training in Hawaii at this time.

#### Qualities

Marissa is intelligent, articulate, and knowledgeable regarding established recovery modalities.

On a personal level, she is compassionate, perceptive, and capable of meeting people where they are.

#### Experience

Marissa has been an active peer staff for client groups in North Hollywood, CA, doing trainings on relevant recovery modalities developed by NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and

peer-developed recovery modalities, and also working one-on-one with clients for all the time I have known her. After she moved to Arizona, and then to Hawaii, we have kept in touch keeping me apprised of her peer advocate activities.

Possible Conflict of Interest

I see no possible conflicts of interest. She has conquered long Covid, and has been actively been engaged in a local mental health clubhouse. Her family is caring for her 90+-year-old mother in the home, and would support her involvement in the above committee.

Final Analysis

Marissa Squirrel Celeste would bring a fresh, educated voice to the Senate Mental Health Committee should her application be accepted.

I could not recommend Ms. Celeste more highly as an excellent candidate for your consideration.

Gwen Lewis - Reid