Request/Question:

What has the experience been with Laura’s law in terms of number of cases brought to court, the results and the costs? Is this program adequately funded?

During the first four years of the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program (AOT), Behavioral Wellness (BWell) brought, on average, one case to court each year. The bulk of the work and costs incurred were in the outreach and engagement portion of the program. During the first three years of the program, AOT had a waitlist (in South County only) for two of the 36 months. During the fourth year, however, AOT has received more referrals in South County and the number of months on a waitlist has increased. Current staffing for the AOT program in South County includes 1.0 FTE Outreach Workers and 0.05 FTE Psychologist. Additional resources to address potential spikes in demand for intensive outreach and engagement for the South County program could be redirected from other programs in the department on a temporary basis. Extra help staffing ($40K) may also address this need.

The department will continue to monitor program data and need and, should higher demand be sustained, the department will consider requesting additional staffing in FY 2022-23. The annual cost to double the capacity of the South County program is $136K. This would increase the Outreach Workers from 1.0 FTE to 2.0 FTE and the Psychologist from 0.05 FTE to 0.10 FTE. Additional staffing would allow 10 more individuals to be served through the program. Furthermore, additional funding to provide service supports to these individuals would likely be required.

Staffing dedicated to the AOT program has not changed since the pilot began. Subject to the Board’s direction, the CEO would work with the department to identify potential funding for this expansion by either reprioritizing existing departmental funds or identifying additional eligible funding.