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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

**MAYOR LONDON BREED ANNOUNCES NEW
DIRECTOR OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES AND
MENTAL HEALTH SF**

Dr. Hillary Kunins joins the Department of Public Health to lead the City's Mental Health SF initiative and other behavioral health programs that serve 30,000 San Franciscans each year

San Francisco, CA — Mayor London N. Breed and Director of Health Dr. Grant Colfax today announced the hiring of a new Director of Behavioral Health Services and Mental Health SF, Dr. Hillary Kunins, to lead the transformation of mental health and substance use care for San Francisco.

Dr. Kunins, an internist and addiction medicine physician, currently serves as Executive Deputy Commissioner of Mental Hygiene at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. She leads strategic and equity-driven initiatives to improve the behavioral health of all New Yorkers—including children, youth and families, and people who are justice-involved, who are experiencing homelessness, who live with developmental challenges, and who use drugs.

“This is a critical time for behavioral health care in San Francisco,” said Mayor London Breed. “As we emerge from this pandemic and move towards recovery, we have an opportunity to transform how we deliver services and care to better serve those in need in our City. With a leader of national caliber like Dr. Kunins, we can build on our work to reform mental health services, continue our work to implement Mental Health SF, and find innovative ways to address the overdose crisis in our city.”

Dr. Kunins helped quickly implement and scale up Mayor Bill de Blasio's \$60 million HealingNYC initiative, reimagining New York City's public health approaches to substance use and overdose. Her experience in naloxone distribution, peer support, and expanding access to buprenorphine treatment will inform ongoing overdose prevention efforts in the San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH).

One of Dr. Kunins' primary responsibilities, when she joins DPH in March 2021, will be to direct the implementation of Mental Health SF legislation unanimously supported by Mayor Breed and the Board of Supervisors in December 2019.

Informed by the Mental Health Reform team directed by Mayor Breed's appointee Dr. Anton Nigusse Bland, Mental Health SF is already under way with programs such as the Street Crisis Response Team. Mental Health SF includes new mental health and substance use treatment beds, a Mental Health Service Center, an Office of Coordinated Care, and other programs designed to



serve the 4,000 San Franciscans Dr. Nigusse Bland identified as simultaneously experiencing homelessness, serious mental illness, and substance use disorder.

Mental Health SF is a key initiative of DPH Behavioral Health Services (BHS), which delivers mental health and substance use care, from early intervention programs in schools to outpatient counseling, residential treatment, and crisis services to some 30,000 San Franciscans each year.

“After a nationwide search, I am thrilled to welcome Dr. Hillary Kunins to the San Francisco Department of Public Health,” said Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health. “Dr. Kunins is a highly regarded leader of New York City’s health department, and her dedication to health equity for people with behavioral health concerns will serve our City well.”

“Just as San Francisco faces an historic crisis in overlapping mental health, substance use and homelessness concerns, the City also leads the country with its Mental Health SF blueprint and commitment to innovation in behavioral health care,” said Dr. Kunins. “I am honored to join this team and bring my experience to envision and implement an equitable, comprehensive and respectful public health approach to serving San Franciscans with mental health and substance use needs.”

Dr. Kunins holds MD and MPH degrees from Columbia University and an MS in Clinical Research from Einstein College of Medicine. When Dr. Kunins assumes her new role in San Francisco, acting Director of Behavioral Health Services Marlo Simmons, who has overseen the integration of Mental Health SF into the ongoing quality improvement of BHS since February 2020, will return to her duties as Deputy Director.

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