

Dear Mayor Soglin and Members of the Council:

We have heard that mental health funding for Cambodians is likely to be awarded to Anesis rather than to our Southeast Asian Healing Center. We are concerned about this for a number of reasons beyond just funding.

We have a more experienced and well-trained staff. They include a PhD psychologist who has treated Cambodian holocaust survivors for 28 years and a Certified Professional Counselor with 25 years of experience treating Cambodians. She has also studied the Khmer language for 15 years.

Mental health programs must be sensitive to culture. The Cambodian culture is one of deference and respect to authority. The Buddhist Temple is their most respected institution. Anesis started a mental health program at the Cambodian Buddhist Temple without asking the Abbott of the Temple or the Board of Directors for permission.

The Board and the Abbot were insulted by this, and by a \$150 check from Anesis, annotated as "rent for 3 months". They returned the check with a letter saying they knew nothing about Anesis, had had no conversations with them at all and were not interested in renting to them. After receiving this clearly worded rejection, Anesis asked to talk with the board President alone. This approach is not at all compatible with Cambodian culture.

In the 28 years we been providing mental health services to Cambodian holocaust survivors, we helped sponsor the first monk, our group cleared the site of the Temple and helped with the building. We continue to support the Temple and the 4 monks and they are an important part of the therapeutic community. We are inexperienced at lobbying, but we do have the clinical experience and cultural sensitivity to treat the Cambodians.

It appears that we have not gotten this information out to you - that most of the information you have comes from a small group who claim to represent the Southeast Asian community. We too are part of that community. We have years of experience and we treat the vast majority of Cambodians who seek mental health services. Please consider us for financial support.

We know there is little time for detailed study of the many issues you are responsible for. Nobody wants complicating complexity in making choices for funding. However, we ask that you take a closer look at who would be the best choice for treating these Cambodian holocaust survivors.

Roger Garms, Ph.D.