

RE: HB 4925-4929

Good Morning Chairperson Kahle & Members of the House Health Policy Committee,

I am Sara Lurie, Chief Executive Officer of Community Mental Health Authority of Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Counties (CMHA-CEI). I came to my job from an educational institution five years ago with no previous experience in the Community Mental Health Arena and quickly learned that the norm is uncertainty when it comes to stable funding as a public behavioral health provider as well as, ongoing threats to dismantle and privatize the system. The most recent legislation proposed that you are considering is concerning. This legislation essentially **causes Michigan's public mental health system to no longer be a public system linked to both state and county government** and as written opens the door for great disruption to the system impacting the local safety net, and turning a nationally recognized managed care system of specialty services backwards to an old, more restrictive and less effective fee for service model. In fact, in exploring the Connecticut system that this plan is based on, I looked at state rankings on prevalence and access to behavioral health services from Mental Health America. I was expecting to see Connecticut as a clear leader in the US rankings but instead found that overall Connecticut and Michigan are very closely rated with Connecticut ranked 15<sup>th</sup> and Michigan ranked 17<sup>th</sup> and for access to care specifically for adults Michigan was ranked better at 6<sup>th</sup> while Connecticut was ranked 10<sup>th</sup>.

I must also question the timing. This legislation is being introduced despite the fact that we are just now emerging from a devastating global pandemic and dealing with the resulting surge in demand for mental health services. The behavioral health workforce that continued to provide ongoing essential services throughout are already fatigued

and leaving the behavioral health workforce. Now with the threat of these potential changes looming it is further driving people out of the workforce and threatening the ability to maintain efforts while meeting the increasing needs.

Despite the threats and the constant distractions, as public behavioral health providers with strong connections and accountability to the counties and communities we serve we are aware of our short-comings and continue to seek improvement and innovation in our services. We know continuous improvement is always needed. I have watched over the past five years as CMHA-CEI staff stepped up to the challenge of becoming a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Expansion Grantee. We adopted this model and pursued funding in order to increase access to care, improve healthcare integration and care coordination, and restore the ability to provide evidence based practices to all who need our specialty behavioral health services. National Outcome Measures that we collect as a grantee show statistically significant improvements for individuals in reduction of psychological distress, increased health, increased days retained in community, reduction in use of illegal substance use, binge drinking and tobacco and a positive perception of care consistently over 90%. With Michigan preparing to begin implementation as a national CCBHC demonstration project state, and the expansion of the Health Home Model in our state, I hope instead of supporting this legislation you will take time to learn about and embrace these efforts and not to disrupt the progress and opportunities these models bring to improve and enhance our current system.

Yearly, we serve an average of 12,000 individuals/families across Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Counties and I believe they deserve more than a quick dismantling of the system they have come to rely upon. They deserve an opportunity to express their thoughts and desires, not to have the rug quickly pulled out from under them while

they are already struggling to cope with the impact of a lengthy pandemic. I implore all to pause and take time to look at the history of positive performance data and understand the strengths and potential that exists in the current system as well as hear from those who stand to be most impacted by this proposed legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns,

Sara Lurie

CEO

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