

Good afternoon, Chair Morse, and members of this Committee.

My name is Chris Matus, and I am Director of Government Relations in the Office of the Wayne County Executive Warren Evans. I appreciate the chance to speak before you today.

I will be brief.

I would like to take this opportunity to applaud Governor Gretchen Whitmer's recommendation for \$50 million in the state budget to reform and expand the State's commitment to providing secured residential treatment for youth in crisis.

The need may look different, but the reality is statewide. Whether it is a young person in the Upper Peninsula who cannot afford or find the in-patient mental health care they need or an adjudicated youth in the Wayne County detention center, who should be receiving treatment in a community-based secured facility, but there is simply nowhere for them to go.

In Wayne County, we have made significant and direct investments in our Juvenile Detention Center. The County increased salaries for staff, filling positions and improving staff-to-youth ratios. There are new programs like a student council, which gives residents an opportunity to make decisions on daily programming, schedules, and rules. There are more opportunities for family visits, including holiday dinners and celebrations. The food is better. This year the County will be moving into a new state-of-the-art justice complex, which will include space for 160 juveniles. The County has also been a longtime leader in the use of diversion programs and the use of tethered supervision when appropriate.

Despite the progress, Wayne County is still struggling to find placement for adjudicated youth in its custody. Too many are forced to remain at the Juvenile Detention Center instead of receiving the treatment they need, and too many youths released on tether have been convicted of capital offenses such as carjacking, sexual assault or homicide. They need to be receiving secure treatment, but there is nowhere for them to go.

The truth is, even with the recent juvenile justice reforms that increase diversion and community-based care, there are juveniles – individuals as old as 17 years – who need secured treatment. A county detention center is not intended to be a long-term treatment center. Local communities need the State of Michigan's help to ensure youths in crisis receive the proper treatment - whether directly from the Department of Health and Human Services or through a robust and supported network of community-based treatment facilities.

Thank you again for your attention to juvenile justice. I am happy to help facilitate a meeting with current Wayne County leadership – either individually or before a future session of this committee – if you need more details on current conditions and needs.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have and wish you a good day.