

March 9, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the 2020/21 MDHHS budget. My name is Sherri Boyd and I am the Executive Director of The Arc Michigan. On behalf of The Arc and our 29 chapters, I offer the following:

A wage increase for direct care workers who serve all populations that receive supports and services via MDHHS should be reflected in this budget, but it is not. There is an ongoing crisis in the field and increasing wages for the most important people doing the most important work is crucial to the lives people with disabilities, who are endangered by lack of staff and often are unable to pursue education or employment and contribute to their communities.

There continues to be a lack of General Fund dollars to serve vulnerable populations who do not qualify for Medicaid. Michigan is still responsible to serve its' most vulnerable populations and people are getting turned away because of the lack of GF. Michigan's entire behavioral health care system has been underfunded for decades and the results can be found throughout our state, especially in our criminal justice system and our homeless shelters.

The SIP plan provided by the department is seen in the advocacy community as "298 rebranded". The Arc Michigan hopes to continue the dialogue with the department to design a public plan that we can all live with, one that will provide the people it is intended to serve with the best possible outcomes. Regardless of what plan is implemented, the state must enforce rules and laws. This continues to be one of the biggest problems with the system and without enforcement no system will be good for consumers. Divesting the state of any responsibility seems to be the end game and that won't have a positive impact on the state's most vulnerable citizens.

