

News Release

Oakland County Board passes resolution opposing Senate bills to amend the Social Welfare Act, the Mental Health Code

December 20, 2021, OAKLAND COUNTY, MI. – The Oakland County Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted a resolution at its December 9 meeting opposing Senate Bills 597-598. The bills would amend the Social Welfare Act and the Mental Health Code by creating privatized solutions for the state's local mental-health services, which would eliminate key components of care at the local community level by shifting the state's largely public mental-health system to private insurers. The resolution was authored by Commissioner **Janet Jackson** (D-Southfield) and co-sponsored by Commissioners **Michael Spisz** (R-Oxford), **Penny Luebs** (D-Clawson), **Gwen Markham** (D-Novi) and **Angela Powell** (D-Pontiac).

"These bills only serve to benefit private insurers and hurt Medicaid recipients with severe mental health, substance abuse disorders or cognitive disabilities," Jackson said. "We must focus on bringing improvements that benefit our residents who receive direct services, instead of making changes at the administrative and managed care level."

Michigan's nationally recognized public mental health system serves 320,000 Michiganders a year. Law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, child protection services, hospitals, emergency rooms, crisis centers, healthcare providers and others work together to implement the sequential intercept model (SIM), which details how individuals with mental and substance-use disorders come into contact with and move through the criminal justice system. The consequences of untreated mental illness have implications across the criminal and civil justice system as well as education and child protection.

County-based community mental-health programs are subject to the state's Freedom of Information Act or Open Meetings Act, but private insurers are not. The bills would reduce public funding for existing community-based, managed-care organizations that are accountable to the individuals they serve, and instead shift the funding to for-profit health plans that are accountable to investors.

"The Commissioners' resolution opposing legislation that threatens critical behavioral health services to Oakland County's most vulnerable citizens is greatly appreciated," said Oakland Community Health Network Executive Director and CEO Dana Lasenby. "It's a tremendous testament to their role as

community leaders to protect and promote public supports that benefit the people they were elected to represent.”

For more information about the Oakland County Board of Commissioners, please visit www.oakgov.com/boc or call 248-858-0100.

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