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Thousands Statewide Will Suffer From \$54 Million Cut in the State's Department of Community Health Budget

Mental Health Advocates Urge Senators to Reconsider Cuts

Lansing, Mich. – Mental health consumers and advocates statewide are shocked and angered after the Senate Department of Community Health (DCH) subcommittee voted to cut \$54 million in non-Medicaid dollars from the Fiscal Year 2011 DCH budget. The Senate DCH Subcommittee voted to cut the \$54 million from the Community Mental Health (CMH) line during Thursday's committee meeting, despite the impact these cuts will have on the mental health community.

Community Mental Health Services boards statewide have suffered drastic cuts in the last two budget years, including \$40 million in General Fund cuts in the 2010 budget and \$12.9 million from Governor Granholm's executive order in 2009. Coupled with the cuts approved by the Senate, these reductions represent more than a 30% reduction in a 15 month period. These cuts have impacted the mental health system dramatically, reducing mental health services for persons without Medicaid in many areas of the state to screening, assessment, crisis intervention and emergency inpatient services only. The additional cuts will put the state on the brink of eliminating a comprehensive system of mental health care for persons without Medicaid coverage.

The Michigan Mental Health Code requires CMHs to serve individuals regardless of their ability to pay. Continuous cuts to funding are making it increasingly more difficult to adhere to this code and individuals in need of mental health services in Michigan are suffering the consequences.

Due to the struggling economy and high unemployment, demand for mental health and substance use disorder services has increased significantly in Michigan. Waiting lists for services have increased while the likelihood that individuals on the list will see services continues to decrease as funding is cut. While waiting for services, many individuals will deteriorate drastically requiring more intensive services; some will die waiting.

“Cutting funding for behavioral health services does not mean individuals in need of services will just go away,” said Michael Vizena, executive director of MACMHB. “Funding cuts are forcing CMH boards to eliminate services and turn away people that have no where else to go. Thousands of people across the state will not be able to receive the treatment they need and will seek it in alternate settings, which ultimately will cost the state more money. These cuts limit CMHs' ability to provide treatment and rehabilitative care, and persons will end up being seen in emergency rooms and hospitals. Some will end up in criminal justice settings. The Senate needs to rethink its actions.”

“We are also disappointed that the Senate did not support the inclusion of a physicians' provider tax in next year's budget plan. This type of tax is being used throughout the healthcare system in Michigan to save our publicly funded healthcare system during these difficult budget times. It would improve payments to physicians, improve access to health care for persons with Medicaid, and help avoid these types of behavioral health service cuts to the citizens of Michigan.

Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards was created in 1967 to support county mental health services programs (CMHSPs) in promoting, maintaining and improving a comprehensive range of community-based mental health services, which enhance the quality of life, promote the emotional well-being, and contribute to healthy and secure communities which benefit all of Michigan's residents. Services managed and delivered by CMHSPs are designed to assist individuals in achieving, maintaining and maximizing their potential and are provided in accordance with the principles of person centered planning. For more information, please visit www.macmhb.org.

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