



Testimony Presented to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for the Department of Community Health

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Good afternoon, Chairman Moolenaar and members of the Subcommittee. I am Gilda Jacobs, President and CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy, formerly the Michigan League for Human Services. The League has been advocating for low-income families and children in Michigan for more than 100 years, and I am pleased today to have the opportunity to present our comments about the governor's proposed DCH budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

We are so pleased the Legislature approved the expansion of Medicaid eligibility with full federal funding and created the Healthy Michigan Plan. We support the governor's recommendation to provide full-year funding for the program which will provide comprehensive healthcare coverage to more than 400,000 currently uninsured residents. Most of these individuals are working and either do not have employer coverage available to them, or it is unaffordable.

There are significant state savings included in the Executive Budget, more than \$250 million, for full implementation of the Healthy Michigan Plan as individuals transition from state-funded programs in the mental health and corrections systems to the federally funded Healthy Michigan Plan. This is a win-win situation – a win for the state budget and a win for those who gain coverage.

We support the recommended expansion of the Healthy Kids Dental program, although we are disappointed that, even with the recommended expansion, more than 400,000 kids in Wayne, Oakland and Kent counties will be left behind – nearly 40% of the eligible children. We know that tooth decay remains the most prevalent chronic disease in children resulting in lost school days and learning, as well as the potential for long-term negative health consequences. Children cannot learn when they are in pain or not in school. But tooth decay is preventable.

We support the increased funding recommended to eliminate the waiting list and serve more eligible individuals in the MIChoice waiver program. Study after study confirms that given a choice, those who are no longer able to care for themselves without assistance, prefer to receive assistance in their homes or communities rather than being forced into an institutional setting.

We are pleased that the governor is recommending a state investment in Medicaid to continue half of the primary care rate increase implemented in FY13. As you well know, primary care access is critical to attaining or maintaining good health.

We support the governor's recommended increases to begin implementation of the Mental Health and Wellness Commission recommendations. Removing service gaps, eliminating stigmas, and treating mental health conditions before they escalate or require Corrections' system interventions will be beneficial to all Michigan residents. In addition, coordination and integration of mental health and physical health services are critical to positive outcomes. People come as a package, not as individual parts.

We support the recommended investments to expand home visiting programs to support families and promote the healthy development of infants and children and improve early childhood outcomes.

In summary the League supports:

- Healthy Michigan Plan funding in DCH and in the other departments where funding is recommended to ensure a successful implementation.
- Healthy Kids Dental investments to expand coverage as recommended, but also funding for all eligible kids to be covered.
 - **An additional investment of \$22 million in state funds, bringing in an additional \$44 million in federal funds, to cover the remaining 402,000 Medicaid-eligible children currently left behind.**
- Elimination of the MIChoice waiting list with funding to provide services to eligible individuals.
- Investment of state funds to continue part of the Medicaid primary care rate increase.
- Investment of state funds to begin implementation of the Mental Health and Wellness Commission recommendations to improve mental health treatment and outcomes.
- Investment of state funds to support families and promote the healthy development of infants and young children through home visiting programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee. We look forward to working with you as the budget process progresses.