



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

Gilda Z. Jacobs, President and CEO

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Good afternoon, Chairman Marleau and members of the Subcommittee. I am Gilda Jacobs, President and CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy. 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 continue federal funding for the program which provides comprehensive healthcare coverage to nearly 600,000 low-income residents. I congratulate you for this great success to date and encourage your continued support. Many of these individuals are working and either do not have employer coverage available to them, or it is unaffordable. This program is making a difference in people's lives with its focus on prevention and healthy lifestyle changes. The Healthy Michigan Plan is enabling individuals to take control of their health by focusing not only on prevention services but on also chronic disease management.

We support the recommended expansion of the Healthy Kids Dental program, although we are disappointed that, even with the recommended expansion, more than 170,000 kids in Wayne, Oakland and Kent counties will be left behind. 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. Tooth decay is preventable. We look forward to the day when funding is available to cover all Medicaid-eligible children.

We are pleased that the governor is recommending state investments in Medicaid to continue half of the primary care rate increase implemented in FY2013. As you well know, primary care access is critical to attaining or maintaining good health.

We also support improvements to promote access to adult dental services in Medicaid. Access to dental services for adult Medicaid enrollees has been a long-standing problem that has resulted in escalated dental conditions and serious complications.

We support the governor's recommendation to add \$20 million in state funds to cover behavioral health services for those not eligible for Medicaid or the Healthy Michigan Plan. This is a critical need many of you have heard about.

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We support continued funding and efforts 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 support the governor's recommendation to continue 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.

In summary the League supports:

- ◆ Healthy Michigan Plan full funding in DCH and in the other departments where funding is recommended to ensure continuation of this highly successful program.
- ◆ Investments in children, including:
 - Healthy Kids Dental investments to expand coverage as recommended, and subsequently to all Medicaid-eligible children,
 - Investment of state funds to support families and promote the healthy development of infants and young children through home visiting programs,
 - Continued funding of the Infant Mortality Reduction Plan initiative – we are seeing significant declines in infant mortality, particularly in African-American babies.
- ◆ Investment of \$20 million in state funds to close the gap in needed behavioral health funding for those not eligible for Medicaid or the Healthy Michigan Plan.
- ◆ Investment of state funds to continue a portion of the Medicaid primary care rate increase.
- ◆ Improvements to adult dental access for Medicaid enrollees.
- ◆ Continued implementation of the Mental Health and Wellness Commission recommendations to improvement mental health treatment and outcomes.
- ◆ Elimination of waiting lists for MIChoice services.

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