

Dear Legislator,

I am writing in opposition to Senate Bills 597, 598, and 714. These bills would undermine Michigan's public mental health system. These bills are based on privatization that has no reliable chance of improving the availability or quality of mental health care for Michiganders. While privatization is an easy and lucrative path for some entities, it would further complicate and dilute the delivery of mental health services for needy people in their communities.

Mental health services can only be productively delivered in communities with the involvement and respect for families. A continuum of services is required that features face-to-face interaction. These bills take Michigan in the opposite direction.

Funding and improvements to mental health services were sorely needed even before the radical ongoing increase in mental health issues. The private sector always has a role and needs to be a partner, but it should not be the system owner or receive preferential treatment, as these bills imply. The nature of mental health care brings challenges that the administrative/managed care model as prescribed cannot support.

Michigan public mental health services have been positively changing in recent years, and are poised for more. This progress should not be abandoned; this is where the newly available federal funding should be applied. There is no good reason why these funds cannot be directed much closer to the communities where it is needed. Communities are where the services must be delivered and can be measured, where innovation can grow, and where the actual care givers and family issues can be supported.

Eliminate Senate Bills 597, 598, and 714. Please stop the privatization and work with public community-based efforts to define the proper path.

Respectfully and sincerely,