

Representative Poleski,

I am writing to you today to express my concern over HB4862. Currently, Michigan has a Public Health Code that considers substance abuse separately from Mental Health. This is important in terms of service provision to citizens of our state that struggle with addiction. While frequently, substance abuse occurs concurrently with other mental health issues, often treatment needs differ. HB4862 would end some of the services designed to serve people struggling with substance abuse. This will create additional community concerns as often substance abuse leads to anti-social behavior due to the nature of addiction. With the appropriate systems in place, Michigan can provide services to individuals struggling with addiction, helping them to maintain their ability to contribute productively to society.

Removing the Public Health code supporting substance abuse, will also impact the ability of local communities to prevent substance abuse. Often prevention efforts are focused on preventing youth substance use. Efforts focusing on youth help youth to develop skills that will allow them to succeed as they attend college and enter the workforce. Recently, Prevention efforts have focused on population level strategies. Population level strategies help to change the community context youth live in and help to create a community where youth are empowered to make healthy choices. Additionally, implementing environmental or population prevention strategies protect the wider community from dangers such as drinking and driving and public violence due to extreme intoxication. HB4862 would endanger local communities ability to prevent youth substance use and adult abuse.

The current public health code in Michigan complies with the federal standards for substance abuse prevention and treatment services. Because of this, Michigan receives millions of dollars in federal funding to provide substance abuse prevention and treatment services. The current bill (HB4862) would dismantle the current system, and jeopardize Michigan's ability to access this federal money. Without this money, non-profits and local services to people in need in Michigan will be at risk. Without these services, there will be hundreds of thousands of people who will not be able to access the services they need to manage their addiction.

Recently, the State of Michigan has began implementing licensing for many helping professions. An example of this is 2005 law passed to require the licensing of Michigan's Social Workers. Licensing professionals helps to establish a level of competent service that will be provided to all who seek help. HB4862 would remove the license requirements for substance abuse treatment and prevention services. This will reduce the effectiveness of services provided. As a Social Worker who has both her Master's of Social Work License and her substance abuse prevention certification, I believe that removing licensing requirements will greatly diminish the skills of professionals working on substance abuse issues. This will in turn harm their clients. This will also reduce Michigan's ability to compete federally. Currently in Michigan there are multiple coalitions receiving special funding for their local work in preventing substance abuse. Each community that has this funding receives at least an additional \$120,000 to prevent substance abuse. This funding would be in danger if Michigan no longer certified it's substance abuse professionals.

Please reconsider passing HB4862. While I do not disagree that the current substance abuse system in Michigan, the bill as it currently stands would dismantle the system in a way that would endanger the people who need services the most, including children. The state of Michigan has spent the last 3 years working on implementing a Recovery Oriented System of Care (ROSC). The plan to implement the ROSC has brought in additional federal money to implement this system. It has also begun to encourage system changes throughout the entire state. HB4862 and HB4863 puts this work in danger as well as the federal money it has brought into the state.

Please work with the current system components in redesigning the system. Those that work within system know the problems with the system and would like to see if function well for the clients it serves. The current system components have a number of ideas for how to make the system function better. Please consider asking these experts to help craft language that would improve the systems functioning without endangering programs, professional standards, federal funding and most of all the community members helped by the substance abuse prevention and treatment services. Please do not pass HB4862 or HB4863.

Sincerely,

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