Senate Health Policy Committee Sentate Bill 713
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Parent of a Developmentally Disabled Child
Benzie County Commission Chair
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As a parent of a child with Down's Syndrome and a Benzie County Commissioner I am in support of S.B. 713. I have seen many times governmental systems hide behind regulation and statute to foster and maintain their silo's to the detriment of services and individuals (CMH, Public Health, Hospital systems, etc...). In rural areas of the State, this is particularly difficult giving the lack of options not only for governmental resources but also for private providers.

Currently Community Mental Health facilities (the focus of bill S.B. 713) can hide behind Attorney General Opinions such as A.G. 5750 and 6563. What this bill will do is clearly state to the CMH that where necessary and required that they can (and I would argue in fact have an obligation to step up to the plate) help the local health care community (including private and public) to enhance the overall care for the individuals they are mandated to serve. Further, it brings governmental immunity to the table where health care providers would otherwise refuse to serve, thus providing and important safety-net to local health delivery systems. For too long the head has been separated from the body and this would be a very small yet important step towards putting it closer to the shoulders, we need a holistic approach to providing health care for individuals in services and those who may not know they need services.

There are those that feel this bill may open the door to private enterprise opportunities for the CMH's throughout the State. It is even more important that this language change is placed in the powers section of the CMH (that they have the power to participate). Currently in the absence of this clear statement, CMH's would in fact have incentive to pursue private activities as they would feel that they have no cause to collaborate with any private providers or Accountable Care Organizations in their service area, this line of thinking is already being pursued by some in the State of Michigan through the federal Accountable Care Act section 2703 (Behavioral Health Homes). Besides, activities such as this are regulated by government entities that look for instances where public tax dollars are used to usurp private enterprise as well as federal Stark laws, etc... As this legislation clearly states, a CMH can participate with local health care initiatives and therefore, it is highly unlikely in urban areas they will strike out on their own and in rural areas of the state (remember less than 20% of the population lives north of M-55 to Delta County) CMH's may work with community partners to strengthen resources and we also need to work with the system to strengthen resources and with this bill, if a rural CMH is asked to help they would no longer be able to say, "Sorry we are forbidden pursuant to...blah, blah".

To me S.B. 713 is only the beginning. I feel that all governmental safety-net organizations, should be able to share administrative resources within the "community" to further the whole health of individuals and that any legislation that provides road blocks towards that end should be addressed, altered, or eliminated to provide additional resources to serving individuals with needs. Because individuals like my son often become dependent upon the State for services and I think the biggest measure of a society is how it takes care of all its citizens.