

Messaging, Media, & Advocacy

Guidance in Response to MDHHS' Proposed Changes to the Public Mental Health System in Michigan

In February 2025, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) announced that they were seeking public input through an online survey as the department moves to a competitive procurement process for the state's Prepaid Inpatient Health Plan (PIHP) contracts. The survey resulted in 2,600 responses. It was announced that in July, MDHHS will be releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to move the competitive procurement process forward, with implementation slated for October 2026.

Plans such as this have, in the past, opened the door to privatizing Michigan's public mental health system. This would fundamentally change the way individuals receive and access services, disrupting care, creating confusion, and risking potential funding cuts.

On the following pages, you'll find messaging for letters, social media posts, and more that you can use to tell your legislators and government leaders the dangers of allowing this plan to move forward and the potential implications on you, your work, or someone you love.



**St. Clair County
Community Mental Health**

Providing Opportunities for Health, Wellness, & Connection

www.scccmh.org



To access this information or to find your local legislator, scan the QR code.

Key Messages & Talking Points in Response to MDHHS's Proposed Changes

These points are here to give you the facts of the situation; you can personalize them when you advocate.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has proposed two major changes that threaten local control, funding, and transparency in the community mental health system.

These changes would:

1. Remove local public funding and oversight by consolidating Michigan's 10 Prepaid Inpatient Health Plan (PIHP) regions into three regions.
2. Directly fund private Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs), bypassing public oversight and coordination.

Both changes would privatize mental health care, reducing access to services, increasing system fragmentation, and resulting in a significant loss of local accountability.

- Michigan's public mental health system is designed to be locally driven, transparent, and accountable. These changes threaten that foundation.
- For decades, St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMH) and other CMHs have provided our communities with person-centered, integrated care.
- These proposed changes would privatize community mental health care in Michigan.
- MDHHS plans to consolidate 10 PIHPs into three (3) and will only allow non-profit organizations that do not provide care to manage these new regions.
- MDHHS' proposed changes will eliminate local decision-making and allow large private non-profit organizations to control funding, with no public oversight.
- Private entities are not required to follow public oversight mechanisms, such as the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or the Open Meetings Act, and they do not allow residents to vote for the legislators who oversee them. This shift undermines the public's ability to access information and participate in decision-making.
- Many services currently offered by SCCCMMH could be **reduced or eliminated** under a privatized model, making it more difficult for individuals to access mental health and substance use services.
- Shifting care to private organizations, which typically have an administrative overhead of around 15% compared to the current PIHPs as low as 2%, could reduce funding for direct services by an estimated \$300-\$500 million annually.
- States like Arizona, Arkansas, California, Iowa, and Ohio privatized their mental health care, and it led to payment delays, inaccurate rates, inexplicable claim rejections, fewer available providers, and the elimination of vital services.
- Two-thirds of Michigan voters (67%) prefer a mental health system managed by public entities specializing in mental health care rather than one overseen by private companies, according to a 2022 EPIC-MRA poll.
- In addition to changing the PIHP structure, MDHHS plans to bypass regional oversight and directly fund private CCBHCs. These clinics would operate independently, without local coordination or managed care standards.
- The direct funding of private CCBHCs will fragment services, reduce coordination, and funding from safety-net services for uninsured and underinsured people experiencing severe mental health challenges.
- Without coordination, CCBHCs could duplicate efforts or leave care gaps. The plan reduces resources for vital services like residential care or inpatient hospitalization and allows private entities to decide how funds are spent.
- This is not just a structural change. It represents a loss of values: transparency, accountability, and local control. The community knows best what they need, not large private organizations.
- These changes are happening quickly, and people need to advocate against them.

Key Messages & Talking Points in Response to MDHHS Proposed Changes

Talk Track

These are intended to help guide employees, partners, and providers in conversations with individuals they serve:

- If you have a moment, I'd like to share an update with you that could impact how mental health and substance use services are provided to St. Clair County residents.
- The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services wants to change how mental health and substance use services are managed and administered throughout Michigan.
- These changes would privatize mental health services and substance use care throughout the state.
- If these changes occur, they will reduce local control, funding, and transparency in the community's mental health system.
- It would also reduce or eliminate many of the services we currently offer.
- As you may know, we partner with St. Clair County Community Mental Health to provide a wide range of services.*
- St. Clair County Community Mental Health has been around for 60 years. The agency has helped hundreds of thousands of St. Clair County residents access life-changing mental health and substance use services and treatment.
- Many services currently offered by SCCCMH could be reduced or eliminated if the state privatizes mental health care.
- Through its community-based structure, agencies like SCCCMH know the community and the needs of community members best.
- We want to stop privatization, maintain transparency and local control over mental health services, and make sure SCCCMH continues to manage those services in St. Clair County.
- But these changes are happening quickly, and people need to advocate against them, and you can help.
- I encourage you to contact the Governor and your state representative to let them know you want them to stop the state's privatization efforts for mental health and substance use services and keep management of those services locally driven, transparent, and accountable.

*Use this talking point as is or adjust as needed depending on the nature of the relationship with SCCCMH.

Sample Script for Calling Your State Legislators

Find and contact your local State Representative and Senator using the links below.

🔍 Find your State Representative: <https://www.house.mi.gov/>

🔍 Find your State Senator: <https://senate.michigan.gov/findyoursenator/>



State Oversight Committee Members who lead MDHHS Oversight and represent St. Clair County:

- Representative Jay DeBoyer, Chair
 - District 63
 - Email Address: JayDeBoyer@house.mi.gov
 - Phone: 517-373-1789
- Representative Jaime Greene
 - District 65
 - Email Address: JaimeGreene@house.mi.gov
 - Phone: 517-373-1775



A resource for employees, partners, and individuals to use when calling their state legislators' offices.

You: Hello, I would like to comment to Representative/Senator **[insert name]** to stop efforts to privatize mental health care in Michigan.

Staff: Certainly. Please go ahead.

You: Thank you. My name is **[state your name]** and I live at **[state your address]**. I am calling to urge Representative/Senator **[insert name]** to stop the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services from privatizing mental health care in Michigan. These efforts could result in reduced access to care, increased system fragmentation, and a significant loss of transparency and local accountability. I care about this because **[state your reasons(s)]**.

Staff: I will give your message to [Representative/Senator's name]. Would you like him/her to send a response to you?

You: **[Respond yes or no]**. Thank you for your time.

Staff: Thank you for your comment. Have a good day.

Sample Communication to Send to Your Local State Legislator

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🔍 Find your State Senator: <https://senate.michigan.gov/findyoursenator/>

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 - District 65
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 - Phone: 517-373-1775

Dear **[Representative/Senator (Last Name)]**: ★ ★ ★

My name is **[insert your first and last name]**, and I am a member of the St. Clair County community who resides in your district. I am writing to emphasize my strong opposition to Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)'s procurement of Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHPs) and privatization of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs), as I believe this process will negatively impact the accessibility and effectiveness of mental health and substance use care in our community.

Our local PIHP, Region 10, and St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMH) have helped hundreds of thousands of individuals receive mental health and substance use services for 60 years. Shifting control of the public mental health system to private non-profit or for-profit removes public oversight, transparency, and reduces local funding in our community, at the same time, federal cuts to Medicaid are on the horizon. These actions make it harder for the most vulnerable members of our community to access the timely, compassionate, personalized care they deserve. It would also diminish our community's ability to have programs based on its needs.

Additionally, redirecting local funds away from CCBHCs to private organizations does not align with the Michigan Mental Health Code, which states that oversight must be provided by local government organizations and remain locally driven for the people. Privatization and the removal of local public oversight undermine this requirement and put accountability at risk.

This issue concerns me because **[include personal anecdote(s) emphasizing why keeping mental health care local is important to you and your loved ones. Tell your story and the community's story.]**

I appreciate your help. Please let me know if you can advocate for me and fellow St. Clair County residents who rely on SCCCMMH providers by opposing MDHHS' procurement of PIHPs and privatization of CCBHCs.

Sincerely,

[Your First and Last Name]
[Your address]

Sample Communication to Governor Gretchen Whitmer

Contact Governor Whitmer by using the link below.

<https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/contact>

You can also use the Constituent Services phone number at: 517-335-7858

U.S. Mail:

Governor Gretchen Whitmer

P.O. Box 30013

Lansing, MI 48909



Dear Governor Whitmer:

My name is **[insert your first and last name]**, and I am a resident of St. Clair County. I am writing to emphasize my strong opposition to Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)'s procurement of Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHPs) and privatization of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs), as I believe this process will negatively impact the accessibility and effectiveness of mental health and substance use care in our community.

Our local PIHP, Region 10, along with St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMH), has helped hundreds of thousands of individuals receive mental health and substance use services for 60 years. Shifting control of the public mental health system to private, non-profit, or for-profit removes public oversight, transparency, and reduces local funding in our community at the same time as the federal government has announced potentially devastating cuts to Medicaid. These actions make it harder for the most vulnerable members of our community to access the timely, compassionate, personalized care they deserve. It would also diminish our community's ability to have programs based on its needs.

Additionally, redirecting local funds away from CCBHCs to private organizations does not align with the Michigan Mental Health Code, which states oversight must be provided by local government organizations and remain locally driven for the people. Privatization and removal of local public oversight undermine this requirement and put accountability at risk.

This issue concerns me because **[include personal anecdote(s) emphasizing why keeping mental health care local is important to you and your loved ones. Tell your story and the community's story.]**

I appreciate your help. Please let me know if you can advocate for me and fellow St. Clair County residents who rely on St. Clair County Community Mental Health providers by opposing MDHHS' procurement of PIHPs and privatization of CCBHCs.

Sincerely,

[Your First and Last Name]

[Your address]

Sample Social Media Posts

These are intended to be cut-and-paste posts that employees, partners, or individuals can share on their own social media channels to advocate against MDHHS changes.



The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services wants to privatize mental health care across the state - and we need your help to stop them!

Contact the Governor and your state legislators today to let them know you want health services to remain local, transparent, and accessible to all:
<https://bit.ly/4kCQmAI>



Did you know private organizations aren't required to share budgets, meeting minutes, or insights around why they make certain decisions? As a public organization, St. Clair County Community Mental Health is. And those insights help community members understand exactly where and how their money is being spent in the community.

Help us stop Michigan from privatizing mental health care and removing transparency, accountability, and accessibility from mental health care. Contact the Governor and your state legislators today to tell them you want mental health care to remain local: <https://bit.ly/4kCQmAI>



St. Clair County deserves a mental health system that is local, accountable, and transparent. But current efforts from the state to privatize mental health care will put all of that at risk.

You should know where and how state funds are being used in your community. Contact the Governor and your state legislators today to tell them to STOP Michigan from privatizing mental health care: <https://bit.ly/4kCQmAI>



Michigan is currently trying to privatize mental health care. This means a state mental health system with less transparency, fewer safeguards, and weaker public accountability.

This isn't the first time the State of Michigan has tried to privatize community mental health, and each time, Michiganders make it clear they prefer local control and oversight. Tell them again. Contact the Governor and your state legislators today: <https://bit.ly/4kCQmAI>