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Medicaid & Behavioral Health Committee
Lansing, Michigan

Subject: Support for Harm Reduction Programming & Services

Dear Members of the Medicaid & Behavioral Health Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for funding harm reduction programs and the Naloxone portal in Michigan, as a Harm Reduction agency who has been providing syringe access programs to the Flint and surrounding areas for over 10 years. We continue to confront the ongoing challenges related to substance use, it is imperative that we prioritize effective measures to save lives and improve community health outcomes.

Harm reduction programs play a crucial role in providing essential services to individuals at risk of overdose and those struggling with substance use disorders. These programs not only offer critical resources but also foster safe environments for individuals to seek help without the fear of stigmatization. The lack of funding allocated to harm reduction programs in Michigan interferes with public health and the expansion efforts within the state's own opioid response strategy headed by MDHHS. Lack of access to sterile supplies increases the risk of HIV, Hepatitis C, and overdose. Michiganders are spending millions of dollars yearly on healthcare costs from lack of access to sterile supplies such as syringes.
Considering the rising rates of opioid overdoses, it is essential that we allocate the necessary funding to support these initiatives.

Additionally, the Naloxone portal is a vital tool in our fight against opioid overdoses. By ensuring that this resource is adequately funded, we enable greater access to lifesaving Naloxone, which can reverse opioid overdoses and protect lives. Expanding this portal enhances our collective ability to respond effectively to the opioid crisis and empowers individuals and families to take preventative measures. Over the course of 2024, Michigan EMS workers have reported over 8,000 overdoses that they were called to the scene to reverse and provide medical care. I humbly ask this committee to help Michigan in taking a decisive step towards not only reducing/preventing overdose deaths of those most affected by the overdose epidemic but also creating meaningful, comprehensive support systems that will positively impact countless families and communities across our state that won't have this access without your support.

I also urge the House to mirror the Senate's commendable decision to support Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) by incorporating similar funding for harm reduction in its budget proposal. Supporting SSPs is fundamental to promoting public health, reducing the transmission of infectious diseases, and ultimately ensuring the well-being of our communities.

In conclusion, I respectfully ask that you consider these critical funding needs as you deliberate on the budget and support harm reduction efforts in Michigan. Together, we can make a significant impact on the lives of those affected by substance use disorders and foster a healthier, safer community.

Sincerely,

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