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Brater Introduces Legislation to Improve Access to Mental Health Services

Series of bills will help prevent erosion of mental health services during budget negotiations

LANSING – Today Sen. Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor) was joined at a press conference by Sen. Gilda Z. Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods) and Mark Reinstein, President and CEO of the Mental Health Association of Michigan, to introduce legislation that would make sure people with mental illness in Michigan do not fall through the cracks during state budget negotiations.

"When we talk about cutting funding for mental health programs, we are talking about removing treatment options for some of the most vulnerable people in our state," said Sen. Brater. "It is the responsibility of the government to care for these people and make sure they are given the same priority as anyone else with a debilitating medical condition, are treated compassionately and humanely, and are not denied access to help."

The bills introduced today stem from recommendations made by the Michigan Mental Health Commission, which Sen. Jacobs was a part of. The Commission worked to identify ways to improve mental health care in Michigan, and identified barriers to access and inconsistent rights protection among areas needing revision. Many of the bills in this package address ways to improve access and resolve patient rights issues while streamlining services to make available resources go further.

"As a former member of the Mental Health Commission, I want to be certain that the hard work we did does not get lost," said Sen. Jacobs. "This package will help ensure that the commission's recommendations are enacted to help improve the lives of those with mental illness."

Sen. Brater has a long history of fighting to protect those with mental illness. Last year she worked with the State Budget Director and the Governor to obtain funding for Mental Health Courts to improve the quality of Michigan's criminal justice system and save money for Michigan taxpayers. She has fought for mental health parity in her time in the House as well as in the Senate, and introduced a legislative package that would prohibit the sentencing of juveniles to life without parole.

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