

SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER • MARK SCHAUER • 19TH DISTRICT

# Schauer Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 30, 2008

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## **Senator Schauer Helps Pass Funding for Worker Programs, Mental Health Courts, and Higher Education**

*Budgets Pass to Support College and University Funding, Establish Mental Health Courts, and Retrain Laid Off Workers*

LANSING—Senator Schauer continued his fight for Michigan citizens today by negotiating funding for important programs in the 2008-2009 state budget, including money for community colleges and universities, the No Worker Left Behind program and Mental Health Courts.

“We completed these budgets today in a timely and fair fashion and were able to include funding for some innovative programs,” said Sen. Mark Schauer. “Our higher education institutions will continue to prepare our students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century job market while No Worker Left Behind helps Michigan’s invaluable working men and women learn new skills in growing industries.”

Senate Democrats helped pass the Community College, Higher Education, Department of Education, Department of Labor & Economic Growth, Department of Human Services, Department of Community Health, Corrections, Judiciary, State Police, Military & Veterans Affairs, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture and the Department of History, Arts and Libraries budgets today. Transportation, Capital Outlay, General Government, and School Aid still await action. Some highlights of programs approved today include:

- \$65 million for the No Worker Left Behind (NWLB) program, \$15 million of which comes from the state’s General Fund, to help train workers to compete in the 21st century economy.
- Mental Health Courts received \$550,000 in the Judiciary Budget for the operation of pilot programs, and \$1,126,900 in the Department of Community Health Budget for program implementation.
- Almost \$300 million for community colleges and nearly \$1.8 billion for universities. This is an increase in funding from the previous fiscal year.

Today’s legislative action on Mental Health Courts is of particular importance to Jackson, since a Mental Health Court pilot program was rolled out by Jackson County on June 5. Data from Mental Health Courts operating since 1997 in Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Idaho, Illinois, Tennessee, and California have shown that Mental Health Courts can reduce recidivism among people with mental illness in the criminal justice system, improve public health and safety, and save taxpayer dollars. In addition to making financial sense, Mental Health Courts allow persons who end up in jail for a non-violent offense related to their mental illness a more appropriate

route to receive treatment.

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