

July 30, 2014

State Senator
P.O. Box #30036
State Capitol
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

State Representative
P.O. Box #30014
State Capitol
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear State Senator/State Representative:

I urge you to do everything in your power to stop proposed budget reductions to the Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority (OCCMHA). Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities will lose services and be severely impacted if Michigan's Department of Community Health continues to reduce OCCMHA's overall budget relative to Medicaid as well as from the general fund. The budgets for FY14 were reduced by \$14 million; it is anticipated that the FY15 budget will realize an additional \$8-10 million reduction.

Proposed cuts will strip respite services and summer day camps from families, leaving families weary and less equipped to provide for the important daily care of a child with special needs. Children with disabling conditions will lose opportunities for: development of social and practical life skills, communication, community participation, self-respect, character building, responsibility, trustworthiness, and enrichment. Summer camp and respite create jobs, build caring communities and create unexpected relationships benefitting many. These vital programs change lives and futures, and in a cost-benefit analysis, tip the scales in favor of maintaining such services.

Additional concern also arises from the OCCMHA's recently announced "Service Wait List;" the lack of competitive wages for direct care staff-persons; and the new, complex care cases that are continually added to the system. The needs are varied, but the answer is not to continue further budget reductions without a careful analysis of the needs, services, or care-levels of the populations served within each Prepaid Inpatient Health Plan.

In Hubert Humphrey's last speech, he said: *"...the moral test of government is how that government treats those ... who are in the shadows of life; the sick, the needy and the handicapped."* As a parent, I urge you to use your power and influence, as my elected representative, to protect the most vulnerable citizens of our state and stop these proposed reductions. Thank you.

Sincerely,