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Honorable Commission Members:

I thank you for the opportunity to give input regarding the mental health care we are providing in Michigan.

My son Kevin, who is now 21 has been in this system since he was four years old. He wound up in three out of state residential facilities, 2 detention centers, jails and lastly the adult prison at age 15. Due to new medication, more therapy, and his release, he is working towards recovery. There have been many holes since his release; the inability to obtain CMH services, a psychiatrist, and being mistakenly put in jail in January.

I am requesting you look into the following areas:

▪ **INTENSE TRAINING:**

- Mental Health First Aid Training and Crises Intervention Training (CIT) for school staff, probation/parole workers, police departments, firefighters, detention, jail and prison staff.
- Trained Mental Health Teams to assist in schools and communities when crises take place, as well as trained volunteers. This recommendation came from professionals attending a recent Juvenile Justice Summit.

▪ **MEDICATION ACCESS:**

- The ability to access ALL necessary medications, both within the community and while detained or incarcerated.
- The continuation of medication across all systems. Medications should not be stopped in any system because they do not have access to the medications.
- Database so their mental health records will follow them.

▪ **MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS:**

- School settings that allow for creative learning and lower stress for children with mental health needs, some of whom will not fit into our current boxed educational system and wind up being the school to prison pipeline due to our approach.
- Support programs that keep children, juveniles and adults in their communities and in their homes when possible. If not, keep them as close to home so that family involvement is a priority. Do not send out of state.
- Funding issues need to be looked at. Some counties send children out of state or into prison, simply to save the county money.
- Mandate restorative justice practices. Implement and teach within schools as part of curriculum. Utilize in detention centers, jails and our prisons. Currently there are some programs in specific regions of our state.
- We must protect our children. Trained Advocates should be assigned to juveniles within the court system, detention centers, for children sent outside of our state, and those sitting in jails and our prisons. These children are falling through the cracks and 95-98% of them will come back into our communities. The abuse and trauma within these systems only creates exacerbated mental health issues, that we deal with in the end.
- Public Mental Health Services need to be made more widely available
- Safety net program to keep the mentally ill out of the above mentioned systems on the forefront. We say they do not belong, yet we have no safety net to keep them out.
- Mental Health Public Defenders Program (Example: Texas)

▪ **CONSUMERS, YOUTH AND FAMILIES TO SERVE ON COMMISSION**

- Make room on this Commission and the Diversion Council for better representation of those who have experienced the current public system as it is. Taking testimony is not the same as having us at the table and a part of the process.

Thank you,

Lois DeMott