

**Public Hearing with the Mental and Health and Wellness Commission**  
Thursday, September 19, 2013

**Public Comments of Nicholas Mukhtar**  
**Creating Community Solutions Committee**

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Good evening. My name is Nicholas Mukhtar and I am a medical student, Detroit resident, and the founder of the non-profit organization Healthy Detroit. I'm speaking today on behalf of Detroit's planning committee for President Obama's National Dialogue on Mental Health, which I am proud to be a part of. Our committee is comprised of executives and leaders from various health organizations in or around Detroit, some of whom are joining me today, and we are very excited to work closely with the Commission in accomplishing our common goals.

The National Dialogue on Mental Health is a challenge to Americans to hold a national conversation to increase understanding and awareness of the issues and impact of mental health problems. The broad based dialogues will include discussions on how mental health issues affect individuals, families, and our communities overall. The conversations will then lead to action plans designed to improve mental health programs and services for our families, schools, and communities. When several members of Detroit's helping organizations, including myself, were approached by a national partner of this initiative, we gladly accepted the invitation to bring the conversations to Detroit.

Detroit's initial Community Conversations will begin immediately following the November 5 general election later this year. The newly formed city council districts provide an excellent opportunity to organize these discussions and encourage resident engagement at the neighborhood level. Our plan includes hosting a Community Conversation in each of the 7 Districts, comprised of students, parents, teachers, clergy, and mental health patients. This will allow us to engage with a culturally and economically diverse group of residents to better understand the current mental health climate in the city.

The seven Community Conversations will culminate with a citywide event in May 2014, in which aggregate data and information gathered from the conversations will be presented to residents, interested parties, and national, state, and local officials. We are hopeful that the Commission will be able to use the findings to learn what the Detroit community is facing and come up with actions and priorities that address the mental health needs of our community.

Thank you for your time. On behalf of our committee, we are very excited about the goals of the Commission and we look forward to working closely with you in the coming months.