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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:

Agency protests excessive cuts to mental health services in Detroit-Wayne County
Residents to face waiting lists

Detroit, Michigan –The Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency criticized Wednesday’s announcement by a state official that the Michigan Department of Community Health will implement a \$40 million statewide reduction in state general funds for mental health by cutting over 50 percent -- \$20.7 million – from services for residents in Detroit and other Wayne County communities.

MDCH Deputy Director for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Administration Michael Head told the Agency about the cuts during a meeting of the Board of Directors.

“Once again, the biggest burden falls on the backs of Detroit and Wayne County residents with mental illness, developmental disabilities, serious emotional disturbance and substance use disorders,” said D-WCCMHA Executive Director Veda Sharp, LMSW. “Last year in the fourth quarter, we took a \$4.3 million cut, which was 44% of the reduction in the Governor’s Executive Order. That was hard enough. Now this program year, the cut is \$20.7 million and 50% of the total. The cuts are simply disproportionate and excessive.”

In both cases, the MDCH made cuts using a so-called funding equity formula that resulted in higher cuts to Wayne County. Sharp said that while the state funding formula included factors such as unemployment and homelessness, the Agency does not believe those factors were weighed properly to account for current and steadily deteriorating conditions.

“Unfortunately, the poor economy means we are seeing more and more people come into the public mental health system because of the mounting the loss of jobs, benefits, and housing. The recent long lines for energy and other assistance clearly show what is happening in our community,” said Sharp. “These additional state cuts are too deep for a proper safety net.”

The \$20.7 million reduction in state general funds primarily affects services to uninsured residents. Last year, Agency served nearly 25,000 persons without Medicaid and over 40,000 persons with Medicaid.

Sharp indicated that there will be more program reductions to implement the higher reduction. Also, for the first time, the Detroit-Wayne system will establish waiting lists to help manage service delivery with reduced resources.

The Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency serves more than 61,000 residents with mental illness, serious emotional disturbance, developmental disabilities and substance use disorders. The Agency, a division of the Wayne County Department of Health and Human Services, operates a toll-free 24-Hour Help Line for crisis intervention, suicide

prevention, and mental health information and referral, 800-241-4949 or TTY 866-870-2599. –
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