

For Immediate Release
April 9, 2018

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Poll Finds Citizen Support for Mental Health and Public Safety Services

Ann Arbor, MI...A new poll shows most Ann Arbor citizens choose mental health services as their #1 priority for the use of a portion of the City's allocation of the Washtenaw County Mental Health and Public Safety Millage. When given three choices for their #1 priority, 56 percent chose mental health services, 22 percent public safety services, 10 percent climate change actions, and 12% "not sure".

In 2017 a majority of Ann Arbor City Council members indicated their intent to spend 40 percent of the City's millage revenues on climate change actions unrelated to public safety or mental health. If implemented, this expenditure would total about \$8 million over the eight-year life of the millage.

Citizens for Mental Health & Public Safety (CMHPS), a group of Ann Arbor residents, urge the City Council to use the \$8 million for mental health services and closely related public safety services. CMHPS commissioned the poll so anyone interested would have information on citizen preferences.

CMHPS members contend the poll reinforces their position. One of the group's leaders, Glenn Nelson, stated, "A majority of the citizens of Ann Arbor believe the best use of these revenues would be for mental health services. This is a case where wise use of funds and accountability of elected officials should lead to the same decision."

The poll commissioned by CMHPS sheds light on people's views at the time of the election as well as their current views. Although a majority of Council members indicated prior to the election that they intended to spend 40 percent of the City's allocation on climate change actions, 59 percent of citizens had no awareness of this and an additional 16 percent were only vaguely aware. Consistent with this lack of awareness at the time of the election, 77 percent of citizens expected the revenues from the millage would be devoted to mental health and public safety services.

CMHPS members emphasize they distinguish between county and city actions in their assessment. At the county level they strongly support the improved mental health and public safety services made possible by increased funding for Washtenaw Community Mental Health and the Sheriff's Department. These units will receive the bulk of the revenue from the millage.

CMHPS's disagreement with the City does not extend to all elements of the use of the revenues from the Mental Health and Public Safety Services Millage. City officials and

CMHPS members agree on two important components. First, CMHPS supports the intent of Council members to devote 60 percent of the funds to affordable housing and bicycle and pedestrian safety. Second, CMHPS agrees with the recommendation of city staff to “Minimize use of proceeds [from the millage] in FY 2019” to facilitate planning to enable the best results possible in FY 2020 and beyond.¹

Thus, CMHPS’s disagreement with the City Council focuses on its lack of support for mental health services. CMHPS members urge the City Council to include the following new actions in its planning and budgeting decisions to remedy this omission.. First, Council members should appropriate 40 percent of current and future revenues from the millage to mental health services. Second, Council members should appoint an advisory group of experts to identify best practices for improved mental health services and related public safety services in time to inform the biennial budget process for fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

CMHPS members believe the millage funds can make a lasting impact on the needs for mental health and public safety services for Ann Arbor when joined with existing local resources. We can become a model community by using taxpayer-supported funds to provide real solutions to growing mental health and public safety issues. For example, the City could use some of the funding to train and support police officers and local school staff in crisis intervention and de-escalation. This training would help to divert those with mental health challenges from the juvenile court and jail systems as well as increase the capacity of our schools to identify and address mental health issues in students starting at the elementary level through high school.

Attached to this press release is a well-documented “Summary of Gaps and Challenges” produced recently by the Washtenaw Community Mental Health Advisory Committee that reveals the depth and breadth of unmet needs.

A crisis exists in our community. We have the opportunity to make a positive difference in people’s lives by devoting the \$8 million dollars over eight years to support mental health services.

The polling results have a margin of error of +/- 5.7 percent.

A copy of the complete results of the Citizens for Mental Health & Public Safety Poll can be obtained by sending a request to HealthSafetyInAA@gmail.com.

¹ Council Work Session on the FY 2019 Budget on March 12, 2018.

Community Mental Health Advisory Committee Community Conversations, Spring 2018

SUMMARY OF GAPS, CHALLENGES

LOW CAPACITY

- Not enough psychiatrists
- Too few providers in the county accept Medicaid, Medicare or any insurance.
- Not enough residential and inpatient beds
- No community crisis/short-term stay facility
- No alternative to abstinence-based SUD treatment
- Very little options for respite care
- Limited services for persons with co-occurring illnesses (mental illness and substance use disorders)

DELAYS ACROSS THE SYSTEM

- Evaluations , Outpatient appointments
- Case management
- Therapy, Specialty services
- To get into an inpatient beds (capacity issues)
- To be discharged: (capacity issue: lack of community based treatment supports)

Additional delays and obstacles for active substance users, seniors, persons with developmental disabilities, persons with language barriers, persons with long term needs.

FRAGMENTED SYSTEM OF CARE, TOUGH TO ENSURE QUALITY

- Lack of clear information, huge challenge to navigate
- Fragmented, no-low coordination between SUD & MH services
- Inconsistent quality of services: low pay, turnover, large caseloads

FLEXIBLE REVENUE LOST, LIMITED PAYMENT MODELS

- Loss of core services for those without Medicaid, 347 released in 2015
 - Case Management
 - Psychiatry, Medication Management
 - Therapy
- Limited or no payment model for community providers who offer essential case management services.

OVERUSE OF HOSPITALS AND JAILS

- No safe mental health setting for persons in crisis
- No respite services
- Loss of stabilizing services and increase in hospitalizations, law enforcement involvement

SOURCES

- 2016 WCCMH Strategic Plan, Community Engagement and Identified Needs
- 2016 CHRT Gaps Analysis
- 2017 Sequential Intercept Mapping
- 2017 Washtenaw Housing Alliance (WHA) Identified Needs
- 2018 Crisis Services Assessment