

Testimony on HB 5043 and HB 5044
House Ways and Means Committee
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Chair Iden and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of HB 5043 and HB 5044. Roundtable Strategies (RTS) is a Lansing nonprofit organization that operates statewide mediation programs for the Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It also provides information and training in collaborative dispute resolution processes.

RTS supports HB 5043 and HB 5044 for the following reasons:

- Mediation is a proven, cost-effective method for resolving disputes involving individuals and families who receive government-supported services.
- Behavioral health experts believe mediation and other collaborative resolution processes aid the recovery and self-sufficiency goals of those who receive behavioral health services.
- Behavioral health recipients actively participate in planning their services. When a dispute arises over these services, however, recipients lose their active role in meeting their needs. Decision making instead transfers to outside third parties in formal, often adversarial proceedings. This undermines the goal of self-sufficiency and potentially disrupts service delivery and important service relationships.

Mediation:

- Provides a dispute resolution option in which recipients, agencies and providers can together explore solutions. A trained, neutral mediator aids communication among them but has no decision-making authority.
- Enables all parties to express their views and contribute solutions that satisfy all concerned.
- Enables parties to maintain or repair important working relationships.
- Enables parties to resolve issues with less time and cost than formal, adversarial processes.
- Reaches agreement rates of 70 percent or more, reducing the need for those costlier processes.

The legislation:

- Gives recipients a collaborative option for resolving service disputes while maintaining their access to other processes. It thereby protects recipient due process rights.
- Enables the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to deliver mediation services in a coordinated, efficient manner.
- Enables MDHHS to use existing local, low-cost mediation resources, thereby providing convenience to parties and potential savings to the state.

For the above reasons, RTS urges passage of HB 5043 and 5044. Thank you.

David Gruber