

# GONGWER NEWS

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## Stabenow Opposes Shirkey Mental Health Integration Bills

[U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow](#) is opposed to Senate [Majority Leader Mike Shirkey](#)'s proposed integration of physical and mental health services legislation, saying it would upend her efforts on the national level to build up the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics program.

Ms. Stabenow (D-Lansing) told reporters during a Friday event in Lansing that the proposal by Mr. Shirkey (R-Clarklake) "would takes us back decades" and undermine services provided under the growing network of CCBHCs in Michigan.

"He wants to privatize mental health, basically, and have the insurance companies rather than community mental health run the services," Ms. Stabenow said. "They're very targeted only at severely mentally ill as opposed to supporting everyone in the community, whether it's children, whether it's seniors, whether it's someone with addiction."

She was referring to [SB 597](#) Track and [SB 598](#) Track, which are awaiting a floor vote in the Senate. The bills would require the Department of Health and Human Services to develop and implement a phased-in plan to integrate the administration and provision of Medicaid physical health care service and behavioral health specialty services for behavioral health populations through the creation of specialty integrated plans. This would begin January 1, 2023, and extend through 2030.

"It is exactly the opposite approach as what I've been building now, for the last number of years," Ms. Stabenow said.

Her remarks came during a visit to the Community Mental Health Authority of Clinton, Eaton and Ingham counties. She was at the facility with officials touting \$3.37 million in federal funding for a crisis stabilization unit to provide short-term behavioral health services to those in need.

The approach Mr. Shirkey is pursuing, she said, is different than CCBHC program that she has championed in Congress since the late 2000s and was signed into law in 2014.

In the 2014 act an eight-state, two-year demonstration project was established for states to develop CCBHCs.

The CCBHCs provide 24-hour crisis care, with comprehensive mental health and addiction outpatient services. The facilities are required to engage in partnerships with groups including hospitals and law enforcement agencies. They are also reimbursed based on providers' actual costs.

There are currently 33 CCBHCs in Michigan and more than 430 overall across 40 states.

"The Shirkey bill goes in the complete opposite direction," Ms. Stabenow said. "We're building ... a quality community system and crisis services, working with law enforcement and so on, and it would basically undercut all the funding."

A total of \$348 million in federal funding would be provided for under [SB 714](#) Track, the supplemental appropriations component to fund the proposed changes Mr. Shirkey is pushing.

Mr. Shirkey during a Monday appearance on JTV's "The Bart Hawley Show" defended his proposal, saying he hopes to bring it up for a vote soon.

"If there ever was a nonpartisan issue, it needs to be this one, and quite frankly that's why I'm holding it in the Senate," Mr. Shirkey said. "We could get it out with Republican votes, but it needs to be bipartisan."

He said he has the Republican votes in both chambers but wants to wait until there is some bipartisan support to proceed, adding he believes it is close to a vote.

Mr. Shirkey also called most of the arguments in opposition to his proposal "strawman arguments."

Supporters have said the proposed changes would simplify the process and provide care in a way that mirrors those with private insurance, while opponents have contended it would create new hurdles in obtaining care while coming up short on oversight and accountability.

Stakeholders in support have also said the changes would better reflect current times, whereas decades ago mental health was not treated with the same urgency as physical health.

Opponents have also stressed a solution should build on the existing mental health system in the state.

Ms. Stabenow's opposition was largely in line with concerns raised by opponents of Mr. Shirkey's proposal during committee hearings on the bill last year.

During her announcement, Ms. Stabenow listed statistics she said prove the effectiveness of CCBHCs.

Data from the Department of Health and Human Services stated that those who have used CCBHC services had 63.2 percent fewer emergency room visits for behavioral health problems or crises. The department also reported those utilizing the services spent 60.3 percent less time in jails and there was a 40.7 percent reduction in homelessness among such individuals.