



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

John Nevin, Communications Director

Ph: 517-373-0129 Twitter: @MISupremeCourt FB: facebook.com/misupremecourt

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Court Administrator Mack Says Mental Health Reforms Make Michigan ‘National Leader’

LANSING, MI, December 29, 2018 – State Court Administrator Milton L. Mack, Jr., today commended the State Legislature and Governor for recent action to reform the state mental health code to allow for earlier treatment of individuals who need mental health care services prior to a crisis involving the criminal justice system. The Conference of State Court Administrators published a [paper](#) by Mack that includes many of the reforms in these bills.

“This legislation is a monumental step forward and makes Michigan a national leader in making it easier to ask for outpatient mental health treatment – before a crisis and before contact with the justice system,” said State Court Administrator Milton L. Mack, Jr., former chief of the Wayne County Probate Court. “These reforms are the biggest change to the mental health code since it was adopted in 1974. Outpatient treatment is way more effective and less costly than jail or prison. Other key benefits include reduced hospitalization, increased treatment compliance, and improved quality of life.”

Mack also noted that the reforms respond to concerns in Michigan and across the nation that jails and prisons have become the primary institutions for persons with mental illness. The bills address the problem of rigid legal standards for involuntary treatment and inability of courts to intervene when a person’s judgment is so impaired by mental illness that he or she is unable to make informed decisions about that mental illness.

“Representatives Calley and Vaupel deserve great credit for shepherding these bills through the House. I am also grateful to Senator Shirkey for his help and support, and to Lt. Governor Calley for his leadership and deep understanding of this issue,” Mack concluded.

Key bills in the package include:

- [HB 5818 and HB 5819](#) – These bills provide the authority for guardians of legally-incapacitated individuals to provide mental health treatment to their wards.
- [HB 5810](#) – This bill substantively revises Kevin’s Law, with regard to early intervention and assisted outpatient treatment, to broaden the definition of a person requiring treatment and to eliminate the requirement of two testimonies/written depositions for an assisted outpatient treatment only petition, among other reforms.

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