

Sen. Gilda Jacobs

ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Wednesday, September 28, 2005

Talking points

Welcome parents! Welcome children! Welcome mental health partners and professionals! Welcome health care advocates! Welcome to Lansing! Welcome to your day! A day of empowerment! A day to make your voices heard!

On empowerment, Mahatma Gandhi once said: "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you. And then you win." Empowerment is indeed a process and I truly believe that raising awareness for mental health in Michigan has progressed through the first three stages. It's time for us to win!

Today is a day for you to share your opinions face to face with your legislators. To share your stories. To voice your concerns. To tell your legislators not what you're *asking* for, but what you **MUST HAVE** to assure that the children of this state are provided every opportunity and every advantage to grow up strong and independent – and **EMPOWERED**, just as you are today.

You **HAVE** been ignored. Yes, you have even been laughed at. And you have been fought by certain special interests. But today it's your turn to **WIN!**

Today is your day to take it to your legislators. Today is your day to inform them of the needs of Michigan children with emotional difficulties. Today is your day to share your stories and to describe your experiences. Today is your day to inform them of the facts:

FACT ONE: Mental health parity does NOT inflate health costs. The studies have proved it. As one leading economic expert said: “The cost debate is OVER.”

FACT TWO: Some 38 states have enacted parity increases and not one has experienced a rate increase of more than one percent. And some have actually seen declining rates.

FACT THREE: When people receive appropriate treatment for mental health disorders, they have at least a 75 percent rate of success. That’s greater than the recovery rates for many major diseases.

AND FACT FOUR: Segregating mental illness from other medical illnesses is blatant discrimination. It is also dishonest and disingenuous.

TELL THEM THE FACTS!

Because this is your day to promote the critical role that parents and family members **MUST** play in developing policy that will provide for this vulnerable population.

YOU are the folks that will someday bring about mental health parity. And your efforts here today can assure that our **CHILDREN** are empowered. And on that day Michigan will truly boast Healthy Children **AND** Healthy Families.

Thank you.