



INFORMATION PACKET



Wednesday, September 17, 2025
12:30 PM - 3:00 PM • State Capitol Building • Lansing

• MICHIGAN STATE CAPITOL • 110 N CAPITOL AVE, LANSING MI 48933 •



Why we rally

- Enhance public awareness and educate legislators about why mental health matters
- End stigma related to intellectual / developmental disabilities, mental illness, and substance use disorders
- Promote mental health and wellness

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Rally Day Timeline

9:00 a.m. – Noon

- Set up tents and tables. CMHA and Volunteers arrive to assist with set up including organizing flags, distributing water, and arranging supplies.
- Early attendees can meet with legislators in their offices or visit attractions around town.

10:00 a.m.

- Senate begins session.

11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

- WAM Staff Meeting at the Welcome Tent (large tent on SE lawn).

12:00 p.m.

- Rally attendees begin to arrive.
- Pick up button and water.
- CMH designee check-in to receive county statement.
- Emcee welcomes everyone.
- Early attendees can meet with legislators in their offices or have pictures taken on the Capitol steps.
- Press Conference with Senator Stabenow

12:20 p.m.

- Advocacy walkers line up for walk around the Capitol.

12:30 p.m.

- Advocacy Walk begins.

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

- DJ entertains the crowd.

1:00 p.m.

- Guest singers and speakers report to the podium.
- County Representatives, flag carriers and assistants report to stations along Capitol Ave. (Flags are distributed at the County Rep/Flags Tent).
- Advocacy walk wraps up.

1:30 p.m.

- Rally program starts with the National Anthem.
- Opening remarks on Capitol steps.
- Featured speakers address advocates.
- Keynote Speaker – Senator Debbie Stabenow
- House of Representatives begins session.

1:45 p.m.

- Marching begins up middle sidewalk, followed by statements from each county representative.

2:45 p.m.

- Statements conclude.

2:45 – 3:00 p.m.

- Wrap up/closing remarks.
- Group pictures can be taken on the front steps.
- Rally attendees can meet with legislators in the lobby outside of the House of Representatives and Senate chambers, or in their offices if the session is over.

3:00 – 3:30 p.m.

- Rally ends.
- Clean up CMHA and Volunteers.

Capitol Block Layout



1. Welcome Tent

- Event button and water pick up
- Education on voting
- Any inquiries can be addressed here (questions, directions, lost and found)

2. County Representative / Flags Tent

- Pick up your county flag and statement
- Selfie station

“Why We Walk” Talking Points

The Walk-a-Mile in My Shoes Rally gathers advocates who have an intellectual or developmental disability, mental health challenge, or substance use disorder from around Michigan at the state Capitol to inform the public and legislators about access to publicly funded behavioral healthcare.

We want legislators to know:

- **The Michigan Public Mental Health System serves more than 300,000 people and families across the state with quality and affordable integrated healthcare.** Michigan’s public mental health system is one of the best in the country, with controlled costs, community-based care, and proven outcomes for people.
- **Services provided by local community mental health (CMH) boards are essential for Michigan.** CMHs across the state work to ensure those who have intellectual/developmental disabilities and behavioral health disorders have the best chance to live productive, inclusive, and fulfilling lives. CMH serves as a safety net for the state’s most vulnerable citizens.
- **Access and inclusion must remain at the forefront of health care and policy discussions.** Michigan must continue to strengthen awareness and advocate for sound policy to support people with disabilities from all economic backgrounds. We must inform

legislators through letters, phone calls and emails, to help keep behavioral health services fully and equitably funded in Michigan.

Legislators need to protect the behavioral health system.

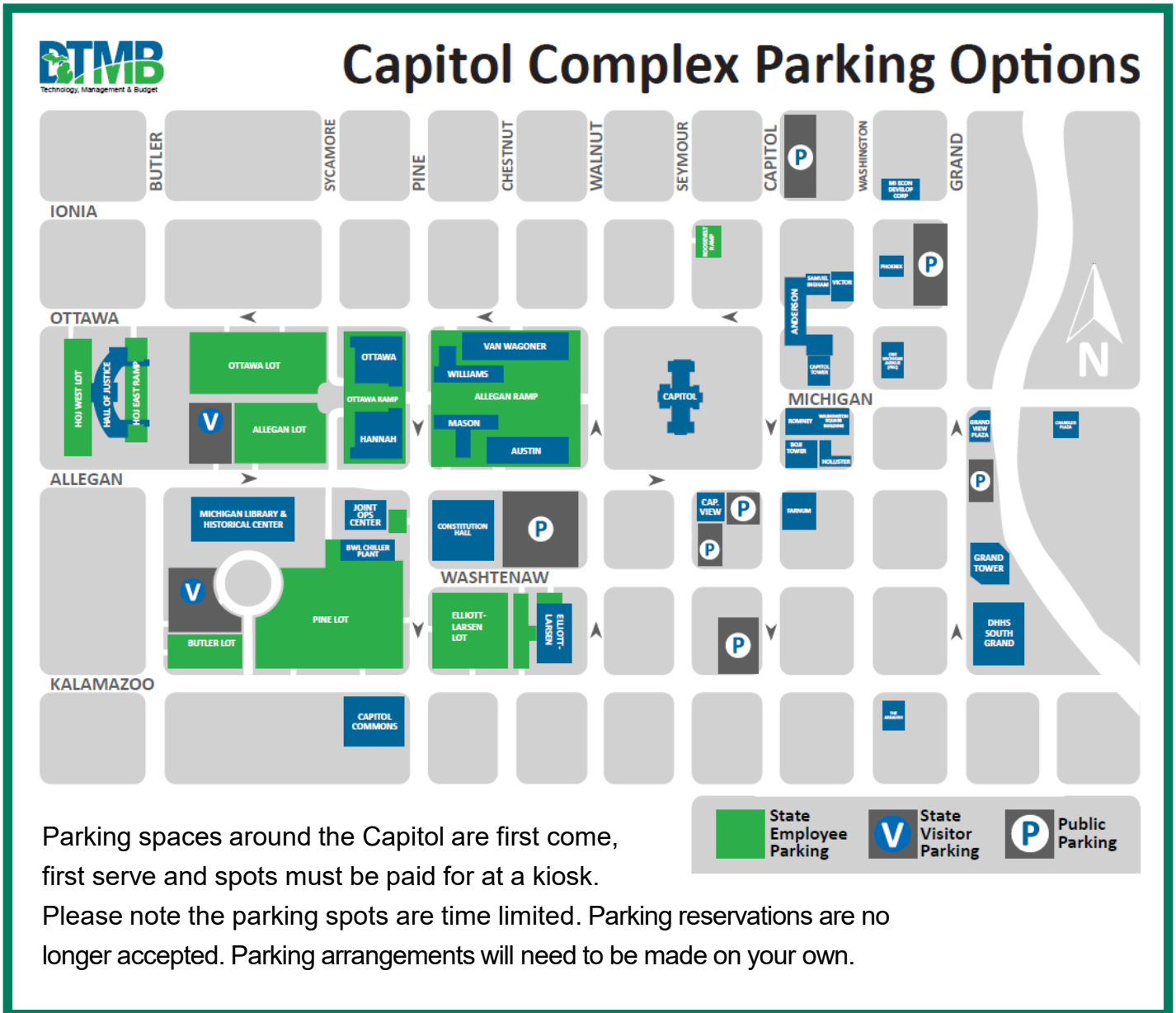
More than 300,000 Michiganders rely on the public behavioral health system for affordable and quality healthcare. Without funding for public mental health service sites, families’ out-of-pocket expenses increase, and vulnerable populations like low-income families, veterans, and the elderly are at risk of losing critical access to care. Areas of focus for the system include — access to services, inpatient care, and workforce needs.

As we work together, we will continue to advocate for:

- Accessible and affordable behavioral health care for all
- The incorporation of the people served in any new changes to the system
- A person-centered system
- Full community inclusion
- Whole-person orientation, including support for housing, employment, transportation, food assistance and nutrition, income supports, child welfare, and education

Parking Options

Meters surrounding the Capitol grounds



Parking Options

Parking structures and meters near the Capitol

A - North Capitol Parking Structure

- Located on Capitol Avenue between Shiawassee Street and Ionia Street.

B - North Grand Parking Structure

- Located on Grand Avenue just north of Michigan Avenue.

C - South Capitol Parking Structure

- Located at the northwest corner of Capitol Avenue and Kalamazoo Street.

D - Townsend Parking Structure

- Located at the corner of Washtenaw Street and Townsend Street. This is the parking structures located closest to the Capitol Building.

Confidentiality Notice*

Walk A Mile in My Shoes Rally – 2025

Please be aware that media from around the state have been invited to the Rally. Pictures/videos will be taken and may be broadly used. By signing this release form, I understand that I may be identified as a mental health consumer and I am willing to have my image/words/attendance used as necessary to promote, publicize, or report on this event. I also understand it will not be possible to remove pictures or retract statements after the fact.

Viewing pictures:

After the event, pictures and commentary may be viewed at the CMHA website, www.cmham.org.

I hereby give my permission to use my photo/statement as described above.

SIGN NAME

DATE

*This is not meant to replace an Agency Release form.

Things to Know

Arrival: It is recommended to arrive around 12:00 p.m. Go to the Welcome Tent to receive a rally button. Buttons will be given to participants on a first-come basis, only one per attendee.

Advocacy Walk: Begins at 12:30 p.m. People can meet at the Capitol steps to join the Walk.

County Representative Check In: A CMH designee must check-in at the County Representative/Flag Tent to share their location on the lawn and pick up their county flag and statement prior to 1:30 p.m.

Event Activities: There will be several activities to participate in between 12:30 and 1:30 p.m. when the Rally officially starts; learning more about state advocacy, interacting with your legislator, getting your photo taken on the Capitol stairs, or participating in an advocacy walk around the Capitol block (starting at the Capitol steps).

Lunch: Food will not be provided. Bottled water will be available at the Welcome Tent. It is recommended you bring or purchase your own food.

Utilizing Outside Vendors: Attendees can use vendors to provide food at the event, at their own expense. If utilizing a vendor, please ensure parking is arranged for the vendor or they know where they should be parking. Please note the Capitol does not allow food carts, wheeled carts, trailers or vehicles on the Capitol lawn or the sidewalk. If the vendor is using a food truck, food cart, or trailer a parking space will be required, please note parking is first come first serve. If you have any questions, need

assistance coordinating please contact the WAM sub-committee.

Parking: A map is provided with parking options closest to the Capitol. Most parking is at least two blocks from the Capitol, so if you have anyone for whom that walk will be difficult, you can drop them off at the Capitol first.

County Representatives: The County representatives and flag bearers designated to make a statement at the Rally should be lined up along Capitol Ave. no later than 1:30 p.m. The representative may have one assistant if needed to assist them with reading their statement. All County Representatives will approach the steps and form a single line up the center sidewalk to the Capitol steps. Only the designated statement provided should be read. There will be two microphones being used for this event. After their statement, the County Reps will remain on the Capitol steps until the conclusion of the statements. At the end of the statements, flags will be turned in.

Rally Program Begins: The rally program begins at 1:30 p.m. The Walk a Mile in My Shoes Rally is not a mile long walk, it is a 'symbolic mile.' If you are able and would like, you can walk around the capitol block before or after the Rally. The advocacy walk will start at the Capitol steps at 12:30 p.m., however groups or individuals can join the walk any time after that.

Rally Closes: The Rally should be finished around 3:00 p.m.



Things to Know

Weather: People are encouraged to bring rain gear, sun block, etc. to deal with whatever nature brings. In the event of severe weather, the rally will be canceled, but due to the nature of this event there will be no advanced notification of cancellation. Please check weather information via the internet at such sites as www.weather.com (Lansing Zip code: 48933).

Legislator Involvement & Meetings: All Legislators who attend the Rally will be encouraged to meet their constituents on the Capitol grounds. At the Welcome Tent, volunteers will be available to assist with directing Legislators to groups from their areas. See “How to Interact with Your Legislator” section of this document for more information.

Pictures/Confidentiality: Media outlets from around the state have been invited to cover the event. Pictures will be taken and may be broadly used. Photos and videos may also be used on the CMHA social media sites. It is assumed those attending this event are aware they will be identified as behavioral health consumers and advocates who are willing to have their image/ words/ attendance used as necessary to promote, publicize, or report on this event. It will not be possible to remove pictures or retract statements after the fact.

Viewing Pictures: After the event, pictures and commentary may be viewed at the CMHA website at www.cmham.org or Facebook at www.facebook.com/CMHAMich

Restrooms: The Capitol Building has a barrier free entrance located at the base of the Capitol steps; bathrooms are located inside. Port-a-potties will also be located outside for attendees’ use.

Interpreters: American Sign Language interpreting will be on-site for the event.

Questions?

If in doubt, seek a Volunteer out; they are wearing bright pink Volunteer shirts! CMHA staff and PR Committee members serve as volunteers for this event. Considerable effort has gone into designing this event and making sure it goes as smoothly as possible. However, unexpected things are likely to happen. Please be patient and flexible. Have fun!

Media Advisory

“Walk-a-Mile in My Shoes” Rally Highlights Need to Protect and Promote Michigan’s Behavioral Health System

Wednesday, September 17, 2025, 12:30 pm – 3:00 pm

More than 2,500 Michigan residents and advocates will gather on the steps of the State Capitol in Lansing on Wednesday, September 17th from 12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m. to promote critical dialogue about protecting and promoting Michigan’s public mental healthcare system during the Annual “Walk-a-Mile in My Shoes” Rally. The event is hosted annually by the Community Mental Health Association of Michigan and its Community Mental Health organizations throughout the state, including (Insert Name of Local CMH or PIHP).

The goal of the event is to inform community members and lawmakers about the behavioral health system. Advocates and individuals will also share their stories first-hand of how they have benefited from individualized care and access. This is the 21st year of the event.

The Rally features an activist walk around Michigan’s State Capitol, shared personal experiences from citizens whose lives are impacted by the use of community behavioral health services, and a call to action for legislators to learn more about and do more for Michigan residents living with an intellectual or developmental disability, mental health challenge, or substance use disorder.

WHO:

More than 2,500 rally attendees, including advocates, CMH members, and individuals who use community mental health services.

WHAT:

Join the “Walk-a-Mile in My Shoes” rally to help inform voters and lawmakers of the public behavioral health system and areas that need enhancement: access to services, integrated healthcare, and workforce recruitment and retention.

WHEN:

Wednesday, September 17, 2025
12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.

WHERE:

Michigan State Capitol 100 N. Capitol Ave.

Lansing, 48933

CONTACT:

(Insert Local Contact)

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Media Advisory

“Walk-a-Mile in My Shoes” Rally Highlights Michigan’s Behavioral Health System

LANSING, Mich. (September 17, 2025) - During the 21st annual Walk-a-Mile in My Shoes Rally, attendees will remind legislators to prioritize people first related to the state’s public behavioral health system, which provides critical services to more than 300,000 Michigan residents living with an intellectual or developmental disability, mental health challenge, or substance use disorder.

Walk-a-Mile in My Shoes is being held at the State Capitol in Lansing on Wednesday, September 17, from 12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m. The event features an activist walk around Michigan’s State Capitol, shared personal experiences from citizens whose lives are impacted by the use of community behavioral health services, and a call to action for legislators to learn more about and do more for Michigan residents living with an intellectual or developmental disability, mental health challenge, or substance use disorder.

The rally is hosted annually by the Community Mental Health Association of Michigan (CMHA). The CMHA is the advocacy organization for community mental health organizations, the CMH-governed public health plans, and the CMH provider networks throughout the state.

“As the state’s CMH system continues to identify and respond to the needs of Michigan residents, we must also continue to advocate for change to reflect the voices of persons served. This includes addressing priority topics like access to care, reducing extended emergency department stays for youth and family, and finding solutions for the workforce crisis impacted by recruitment and retention issues.” **(Local Contact)**. “Michigan has a long-standing reputation as a leader in being a safety net for people and providing quality, community-based public health services. It is imperative that we continue to be forward-thinking leaders that introduce meaningful legislative policy that supports the health and wellness of our communities.” We look forward to collaborating with our partners, both longstanding and newly developed, to continue this state’s national advocacy efforts in promoting the importance of behavioral health care.”

According to the Medicaid Utilization Net Costs reports, Michigan’s public mental health system spends only 6% of funding on administration with no funds in the form of profits to shareholders and dedicating 94% of Medicaid dollars to persons with mental health needs.

Michigan’s public mental health system serves more than 300,000 individuals in the state. CMHA and CMH boards from across the state, mental health, and developmental disability advocacy organizations, are working to promote accessible and affordable mental health care among the legislatures, public and media.

Attendees are encouraged to visit the offices of state legislators to share their thoughts after the event. For more information, visit www.cmham.org.

CONTACT: **(Local Contact)**



Interacting with Legislators

The most meaningful way to influence your legislator is through personal contact. Before contacting your legislator, read available background material on the issue which concerns you. Be a resource of information for your legislator. We strongly suggest you set up an appointment to meet with your legislator during the day, before or after the rally.

Where to Find Your Legislator:

- To locate your Legislator visit: michiganlcv.org/at-the-capitol/find-your-elected-officials/
- Legislators are in Lansing on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.
- House sessions are normally held on Tuesday and Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. and Thursdays at 12:00 p.m. Senate sessions normally begin at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. In addition to sessions, legislators also have committee meetings, which run at various times throughout the day.

Meeting with your Legislator:

- Meet with your legislator at their office. Call ahead to make an appointment to see your legislator, as legislators have busy schedules. If you are unable to make an appointment, do not hesitate to stop by their office anyway. At the very least you will be able to speak with legislative staff that will make your legislator aware of the issue.
- Legislators can sometimes come out of session briefly to speak with you. A message can be sent

through the Sergeant at Arms to your representative or senator. A legislator usually can come out to meet with you, time permitting.

- If you are coming to Lansing for an event and are requesting your legislator to meet you at the event, leave your cell phone number and description of where you will be at their office.

Writing your Legislator:

- When writing a letter, be sure to address it properly with your legislator's full name and include your return address information – a letter with no return address cannot be answered.
- Avoid form letters and petitions. Using your own words will have more of an impact on your legislator. One well-constructed factual letter has more pull than 100 form letters.
- Make sure the letter is timely. Try to write to your legislator while a bill is still in committee, so there is time to act. A letter that arrives after the bill has been passed is not helpful but could have had an influence had it arrived sooner.
- Give Reasoning for your position – it is helpful for a legislator if you explain how an issue would affect you, your family, business, or profession – or the impact on your local community or the state. If you have specialized knowledge, be sure to share it with your legislator. A concrete knowledgeable argument can be used by your legislator in determining the final outcome of a bill.



Poster

Print the 8.5"x11" poster from the next page



Wednesday, September 17

12:30 PM–3:00 PM~State Capitol Building~Lansing

Join us for the 2025 Rally!

Join us in celebrating the 2025 Walk A Mile In My Shoes Rally at the state Capitol in Lansing as we educate the public about behavioral health issues and intellectual and developmental disabilities.

