



NEWS RELEASE

STATE SENATOR
MICHAEL WEBBER

9TH DISTRICT

P.O. Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909-7536 • OFFICE: 517.373.0994 • E-MAIL: SenMWebber@senate.michigan.gov • VISIT: www.SenatorMichaelWebber.com

For Immediate Release
Nov. 4, 2025

Contact: Mitch Moore
517-373-0994

[Webber tells committee he was misled, stonewalled by MDHHS following auditor's report on agency's failings](#)



LANSING, Mich. — [Senate Health Policy Committee Minority Vice Chair Michael Webber](#) described being misled and stonewalled by Michigan Department of Health and Human Services leaders as he [testified Tuesday](#) before the House Oversight Committee on a [state audit](#) that found the agency failed to protect the rights of mental health patients.

“I asked for this audit after hearing too many heartbreaking stories from parents who couldn’t get answers about their kids,” said Webber, R-Rochester Hills. “They described abuse, poor living conditions and even a lack of food, yet got nowhere with MDHHS. Thanks to the auditor’s report, we now have the facts — and they are alarming. MDHHS is failing to protect basic patient rights.”

The auditor general found that over 30% of serious complaints alleging abuse, neglect, injury and even death were not investigated on time. It also revealed that video and audio systems at the five state psychiatric hospitals were often missing or not working.

[In March, Webber sent a letter](#) to MDHHS Director Elizabeth Hertel raising concerns about the functionality of surveillance equipment in state hospitals. [Hertel responded](#) that, “The camera systems for each hospital are robust and in working order. They are checked daily.”

“It’s now clear that the director was either misinformed or intentionally misleading because the audit tells a very different story,” Webber said. “In over 40% of the investigations reviewed, that missing evidence could have made a difference. Recipient rights officers need full access to those recordings to properly investigate complaints.”

“When the state accepts responsibility for someone’s care, it accepts a sacred trust to defend their dignity, protect their rights and act swiftly when those rights are threatened or violated.”

Webber also raised concerns about MDHHS recently deleting two years of public records from its website regarding recipient rights complaints and data related to the Hawthorn Center, the state’s former inpatient psychiatric hospital for minors. The removal occurred [just days after being contacted by news reporters](#).

[On Oct. 13, Webber sent a letter](#) to Hertel requesting a timeline for restoring the data and an explanation of the discrepancies that led to its removal.

[Hertel responded on Oct. 30](#) that the information is back online but ignored Webber’s direct questions.

“Director Hertel and her leadership team have been less than cooperative in addressing critical issues surrounding patient rights and safety,” Webber said to the House committee. “Families must be confident that Michigan’s mental health system protects, not endangers, their loved ones.”

Webber also questioned whether Community Mental Health Services and private hospitals are adhering to the same recipient rights standards required under the mental health code.

“Ninety percent of complaints occur within those facilities, yet the department couldn’t verify if their systems are even working,” Webber said. “Oversight isn’t about politics. It’s about doing what’s right — protecting kids and vulnerable adults who can’t protect themselves.”

###