



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Macomb County Prosecutor seeks faster mental health evaluations in +\$100 million jail proposal**

Mt. Clemens, MI - Macomb County Prosecutor Peter J. Lucido today proposed a plan to streamline court ordered mental health evaluations. The plan would put qualified local, licensed professionals at the Macomb County Jail to perform competency and culpability evaluations to be funded as part of a +\$100 million jail project under review by the Macomb County Commission. Courts use these evaluations to determine if defendants are able to participate in their own defense or can be found criminally at fault for certain crimes. Lucido said he will discuss his proposal with Commissioners as part of the 2023 budget review process.

“It would be crazy not to streamline mental health evaluations as part of a \$100 million jail renovation,” said Lucido. “A person suffering from mental health issues should not be forced to wait in jail months before being cleared for criminal prosecution, or sent to treatment.”

It can take several months to get an evaluation and results from the report. Prior to COVID-19, court ordered evaluation referrals were completed in person by a psychiatrist at the Michigan Center for Forensic Psychiatry, located in Saline, MI. These evaluations have been done via Zoom while defendants remain at the county jail since COVID-19. Lucido said jury trials cannot be done via Zoom, so psychiatric evaluations should not solely be done by Zoom either.

Lucido said his office is considering asking judges to order in-person psychiatric evaluations to occur at the county jail as he seeks a faster turn-around time. He said the goal is to let culpable and competent defendants face prosecution sooner, while letting those needing mental health care get it faster. Lucido said it will result in savings to taxpayers because deputies will no longer need to transport certain defendants to and from Saline, reducing the public safety risk of transporting potentially dangerous mentally ill defendants, and because the expense of housing defendants awaiting results will be reduced.

The Macomb County Board of Commissioners is currently reviewing over a \$100 million request from the County Executive for a central intake facility at the Macomb County jail and an additional \$5 million in jail improvements. Prosecutor Lucido wants the county plan to include qualified local, licensed professionals at the Macomb County Jail to perform competency and culpability evaluations.

In addition to streamlining mental health evaluations, the Macomb County Prosecutor's 2023 budget request to the Macomb County Board of Commissioner's seeks two additional assistant prosecuting attorneys who would participate in mental health treatment court, in addition to other duties. Lucido's requested 2023 budget increase is less than the 2023 requested budget percentage increase of the Macomb County Finance Department, Office of the County Executive, MSU Cooperative Extension, and the Macomb County IT Department.

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