July 14, 2023

Doug Ringler, CPA, CIA
Auditor General
201 N. Washington Square, Sixth Floor
Lansing, MI 48913

Dear Auditor General Ringler,

I am writing to request an audit of Hawthorn Center, Michigan’s only state-run psychiatric hospital for minors, after hosting a listening session with lawmakers and families whose loved ones have suffered under the facility’s care.

Recent media reports by WXYZ have revealed ongoing problems at the Hawthorn Center in Northville Township. At least 17 young patients have escaped from the center under the supervision of Hawthorn personnel and the facility is the subject of a lawsuit pending from an active shooter drill that took place there in December 2022. Officials also have plans to temporarily house patients at Reuther Hospital, where adults are currently being treated, while the aged facility is demolished and reconstructed.

These issues, which have negatively impacted families across the state, deserve a thorough review, and I respectfully ask for an updated performance audit examining the following:

- Patient care and opinions of staff about patient treatment.
- The effectiveness of the Office of Recipient Rights at the Center, which is responsible for patient treatment complaints then and now.
- Clinical decisions.
- The causes of patient escapes and the circumstances involving the active shooter drill that took place in December 2022.

As you review these issues, it may be worthwhile to examine whether communication delays between the Hawthorn Center and the Department of Health and Human Services have contributed to errors.

Thank you in advance for your review. The attached WXYZ articles along with the testimony from family members of patients and victims in the care and protection of the state at the Hawthorn Center will provide additional information and context.
Please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions. A detailed understanding will enable legislators to hold our state agencies accountable and help solve these problems on behalf of those who rely on the care of Hawthorn.

Sincerely,

Senator Michael Webber
District 9

Senator Jim Runestad
District 23

Representative Tom Kuhn
District 57

Representative Jamie Thompson
District 28

Representative Mark Tisdel
District 55