

A State Leader: Jim Haveman

Columns

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After years of leading, Jim Haveman is stepping down from a “job he loves.” He has made a difference.



Jim Haveman was chosen by newly elected governor, John Engler to replace me as state mental health director in 1990 after then Senate Majority Leader Engler defeated my boss, Governor Blanchard.

Governor Engler made a wise choice at that time only reinforced by his twelve years of leading one of the toughest departments of state government –the Department of Community Health (DCH).

Haveman merged the departments of mental health and public health in the mid 90's and went on to lead this combined department with distinction.

Jim Haveman left state government when Governor Granholm arrived.

After leaving the DCH Director role in 2003, Haveman was appointed a senior advisor to the Iraqi Ministry of Health by President George W. Bush. He later created his own health care consulting firm.

When Gov. Snyder needed a proven leader to restart the department of community health Jim

Haveman returned to state government. Haveman served on the board of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, a spot that he stepped down from to avoid any conflict of interest as he reassumed his role leading the DCH under Snyder.

Health Matters

Now a few years later, after suffering a health challenge of his own, a mild stroke, Haveman is stepping down from a job he loves next week. His family, his supportive wife Barb, his children and grandchildren can be proud of his service to the citizens of this great state.

Adding Value And Making A Difference

Jim Haveman, spearheaded the efforts on behalf of Governor Snyder to make the Obamacare/Affordable Care Act to expand Medicaid to 400,000 low income Michiganders. For this alone he deserves the admiration of all Michiganders. Healthy Michigan has at least two fathers- Governor Snyder and Jim Haveman.



At an age many are enjoying the fruits of a well earned retirement, Jim Haveman stepped back into the fray.

Bright, capable, experienced and driven. These comprise a great skills set needed to lead a vitally important department of Michigan state government – the Department of Community Health (DCH).

It was a smart move by Governor Snyder to bring Haveman back to lead the Department of Community Health. A lesser leader would not have been able to help Gov. Snyder shepherd the passage of Healthy Michigan through the legislature.

In appointing Haveman to serve as director of DCH, Snyder said, “We have an ambitious health and wellness agenda that is vital to Michigan’s economic future and overall quality of life, and we’re fortunate that former DCH Director Jim Haveman has agreed to return to state service and drive that agenda forward. Jim is an experienced leader and a recognized innovator.” The governor’s words ring true today.

Jim Haveman and Gov. Snyder

Controversy Follows Leadership

Depending on who you speak to about Haveman’s return – either of these two theme songs might pop into one’s mind: the theme song of the popular 1970s TV sitcom “Welcome Back, Kotter” or “He’s baaack!” from the Freddy Krueger character in horror films such as “A Nightmare on Elm Street”.



Like him or not, much like his former boss, Governor John Engler, and new boss, Gov. Snyder, Haveman is decisive and he leads.

While these traits do not endear him to those who oppose his strategic directions, he advanced the governor’s agenda in a straight-forward manner. This is a vital skill and attribute that helped produce results for Gov. Snyder as he did for Gov. Engler before him.

Like any leader, Haveman’s long tenure has not been conflict free. The Detroit Free Press editorialized when Snyder appointed him for his second stint of leading DCH saying, “Gov. Rick Snyder’s surprise appointment of James Haveman to head the Department of Community Health raises troubling questions about the direction of mental health care in Michigan. During the administration of Gov. John Engler, Haveman was the department head largely responsible for sweeping changes that undermined community mental health care and, in effect, pushed tens of thousands of mentally ill people into jails, homeless shelters, prisons and hospital emergency rooms.” The editorial continued, “Engler and Haveman closed 10 of the state’s 16 psychiatric hospitals. And in the most egregious example, they waged a contentious battle over Lafayette Clinic in Detroit, during which Haveman was held in contempt by Wayne County Circuit Judge Richard Hathaway.”

Northville Psychiatric Hospital- CLOSED

Yet, Haveman focused on mental health in many positive ways in his boomerang leadership of DCH. He co-chaired, along with Lt. Gov Brian Calley, the Mental Health and Wellness Commission which produced a number of recommendations to improve our system of care for persons with serious mental illness and intellectual and developmental disabilities. The full report is available at:
<http://www.michigan.gov/mentalhealth>



Director Haveman encouraged me to take the helm of newly created Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority (www.dwmha.com) joining him in serving some of our most vulnerable and challenged citizens. Haveman joked, “Watkins, at our age, we certainly don’t need these roles to build our resumes – we can focus like a laser on doing right by our fellow citizens.”

Snyder Praises Haveman

Governor Snyder saw the value of director Haveman’s experience gained over his 71 years and sung his praise: “Director Haveman’s leadership has been instrumental as we’ve navigated an ambitious health and wellness agenda that has led to inclusive, bipartisan support to implement a number of key health initiatives that are making a real difference in Michiganders’ lives.” The governor continued, “Jim’s commitment to the health and wellness of our residents has been evident in all that we’ve accomplished and I am grateful for his work. I understand and respect his decision to focus on his health and wish him and his family all the best.”

Dohn Hoyle, the Executive Director of the ARC-Michigan captured Haveman’s spirit best when he learned of Haveman’s return tenure leading DCH saying “Haveman has been a champion for self-determination for people with disabilities and will strive to bring dignity and RESPECT to the people we serve supporting quality, community opportunities.”

I have maintained a professional friendship with Jim since the early 80’s. He has dedicated his life to serving the citizens of Michigan under governors Snyder and Engler. He has placed the needs of our state’s most vulnerable citizens above power and politics and has truly added value and made a difference. On behalf of the vulnerable people served by the state we sincerely thank him for his vision, service and leadership. He will be missed.

A Solid Past

Through most of the 1970s, Haveman helped run Project Rehab, a Grand Rapids substance abuse agency.

Between 1978 and 1985, Haveman was executive director of Kent County Community Mental Health and Bethany Christian as the child and family service agency’s executive director.

Haveman, a 1966 graduate of Calvin College and a born social worker, earned his Master’s Degree in Social Work from Michigan State University.

While not agreeing with every policy decision Jim has made, I like and respect him. I believe he was the right leader at the right time to guide the DCH. Michigan can and should be a leader in assuring our citizens are healthy –in mind, body and spirit. Jim Haveman helped Michigan maintain its historical role of “helping the least among us.”

The Blues

Daniel J. Loepp, president and CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan wishing Haveman well in retirement said, "Director Haveman has been a tireless advocate, never failing to meet the department's mission of protecting, preserving and promoting the health and safety of the people of Michigan. Loepp continued, "Under Jim's leadership, the state has shown improvements to overall health and has greatly decreased the number of uninsured citizens throughout the state."

Wise Replacement

Haveman will be replaced by the department's chief deputy director Nick Lyon. Lyon has been with DCH in a variety of positions since 2003. He has also held leadership positions as the director of the state office of budget development and finance officer for the state Attorney General. He has an economics and political science degree from Yale University.

The appointment of Nick Lyon is an equally wise move by Snyder. The Department of Community Health will be in good hands with Nick at the helm. Nick is bright, steady, respected and a capable leader who knows both the departments programs and the bu

dget numbers which will make the transition extremely smooth and beneficial for all. There will be no learning curve necessary.

Short Tenure?

Time will tell if Nick will have a long tenure at the helm of DCH. Clearly, the Schauer team is working overtime to shorten Snyder's and Nick Lyon's tenure.

Democratic challenger Mark Schauer holds a two-percentage point lead over Republican Governor Rick Snyder, according to a recent EPIC-MRA poll, which shows the race tightening roughly two months from the general election.

With Labor Day behind us, there will be a healthy political battle between Snyder and Schauer until Election Day. The health of Michigan hangs in the balance.

Thank you Jim Haveman for helping make Michigan a better place for us all. Enjoy your family knowing you made a difference in the lives of many throughout Michigan.

State "Bureaucrats" Add Value

While not making the "news" another member of the Department of Community Health is departing soon and will be missed in her own right.



Liz Knisely, Director of the Bureau of Community Based Services who has been with DCH since 2011 commuting from Plymouth, is leaving September 24th to become the CEO at Doctors Hospital of Michigan in Pontiac.

Liz is a tireless advocate for quality community based health service and has been a tremendous supporter of the administrations policies; especially helping to advance Healthy Michigan. She also was extremely supportive and demanding of the Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority as we transitioned from an agency of Wayne County to an authority.

I have worked in the private and public sector throughout my career and some of the best employees I have known work for the State of Michigan. These "bureaucrats" and unsung hero's quietly do their jobs to serve the citizens of our great state.

Liz will be replaced by another skilled, long term employee of DCH, Tom Renwick. The Mental Health Division of the Department of Community Health remains under the steady and level headed hand of Ms. Lynda Zeller.

Thanks Liz. You too have added value and made a difference. You will be missed by your colleagues across the state.

Tom Watkins served the citizens of Michigan as state superintendent of schools and state mental health director. He is the president and CEO of the Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority www.dwmha.com. He can be emailed at: tdwatkins88@gmail.com, or followed on twitter at: [@tdwatkins88](https://twitter.com/tdwatkins88).