



## **Mississippi Department of Mental Health Board of Mental Health Statement on Hiring of New Executive Director**

November 20, 2020

Fellow Mississippians and Other Interested Parties:

We, the Board of Mental Health for the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, are proud to announce the hiring of Ms. Wendy Bailey to serve as the next Executive Director of the Department. Mrs. Bailey has served the Department of Mental Health for fifteen years, most recently serving as the Deputy Director for Administrative Services.

In her most recent position, Ms. Bailey has been intimately involved in the executive leadership of the Department, and she has played a crucial role in the Department's litigation regarding mental health services in Mississippi. Further, she has been at the forefront of the Department's ongoing fight against COVID-19 as it has relentlessly attacked our long term care facilities.

Mrs. Bailey's resume and her specific experience with these ongoing challenges within the Department made her an incomparable choice for this position, and the Department is extraordinarily fortunate to be able to maintain this level of continuity in such a time of crises.

With regard to the hiring process, Ms. Mikula first approached us, the Board, regarding the possibility of her retirement over a year ago. She shared a need to spend more time serving her family, and given the all-consuming nature of the federal lawsuit, this was completely understandable. Ms. Mikula graciously agreed to continue to serve the Department through the entirety of the trial, and she has remained even until Judge Reeves appointed a Special Master, a person we all respect and with whom we look forward to working. Plainly put, federal lawsuits like the State of Mississippi is currently enduring have effectively bankrupted other states, and Ms. Mikula's perseverance has enabled the Department to be positioned for huge improvement moving forward.

In the year since Ms. Mikula made her desires known to the Board, we, the Board, have worked on a succession plan which would balance the competing interests of hiring the best candidate for the job while also ensuring that the Department, its 5,700 staff, and the over 110,000 Mississippians we serve, would enjoy the stability and strength of a continuous and prompt

DR. MANDA GRIFFIN - CHAIR • DR. JIM HERZOG - VICE CHAIR  
DR. ALYSSA KILLEBREW • ROBERT LANDRUM • DR. JOHN MONTGOMERY • TERESA MOSLEY  
COURTNEY PHILLIPS • STEWART RUTLEDGE • DR. SAMPAT SHIVANGI



transition once the change was announced. In other words, it was vital to our State that we not add yet another emergency to an already historically challenging era in the Department.

Fortunately, Ms. Bailey satisfied both concerns. She is the best candidate for the job, and her institutional knowledge combined with her professional skills would simply be impossible for any person, inside or outside of the Department, to match. This is yet another credit to Ms. Mikula's leadership that she invested so much time in growing people from within our State to serve our State. In the end, this made the Board's decision easy, and it was not even close.

Finally, we, the Board, are aware that, prior to this statement, this hiring process could have appeared rushed or predetermined, but, in reality, this has been a very deliberate process which has taken over a year of our work. And, we are very happy that the end result has yielded such a strong candidate which has enabled such a smooth transition. Few things are currently going easily in 2020, and this is a win we can all be proud of.

We thank Ms. Mikula for her leadership, her tenacity, and her foresight, and we are proud to introduce Ms. Wendy Bailey to lead our Department into an even better future.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Manda Griffin, Chair  
Board of Mental Health for the Mississippi Department of Mental Health

---

Dr. Alyssa Killebrew

Dr. Jim Herzog, Vice Chair

Dr. John Montgomery

Mr. Robert Landrum

Mr. Courtney Phillips

Ms. Teresa Mosley

Dr. Sampat Shivangi

Mr. Stewart Rutledge

---

*For further information or questions for the Board,  
please feel free to contact Grenaye Sullivan by email at [Grenaye.Sullivan@dmh.ms.gov](mailto:Grenaye.Sullivan@dmh.ms.gov).*