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## **Freedom Fund to Gov. Whitmer: Produce Taverna to Testify about No-Bid Contract Scandal– Or Fire Her, Clean-Up MDHHS** *Whitmer Official Behind Scandal-Plagued “Kolehouse” Contract is Ducking Office of Auditor General, “Lawyered Up”*

**LANSING, MI, August 13, 2020** – The Michigan Freedom Fund today asked Governor Gretchen Whitmer to immediately produce her high ranking administration official, Andrea Taverna, to testify and cooperate fully with the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and the legislature’s Joint Select Committee (JSC) investigating a scandal-plagued state contract awarded to Whitmer’s campaign consultants for COVID-19 contact tracing – or to fire Taverna and clean house at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) after potentially criminal handling of state tax dollars.

Taverna, the MDHHS Senior Advisor on Opioid Strategy, was identified by the OAG as the political staffer primarily in charge of contact tracing. When approached with questions from the OAG, Taverna hired a lawyer and has subsequently refused to cooperate with the state investigation.

“Investigators and the Auditor General have clearly only scratched the surface of the corruption within Governor Whitmer’s administration and the Department of Health and Human Services, and it’s up to the Governor to clean house,” said Tony Daunt, Executive Director of the Michigan Freedom Fund. “High ranking political officials with nothing to hide don’t “lawyer up,” and they don’t hide from investigators. If Whitmer can’t convince Andrea Taverna – her own staffer – to fully cooperate with investigators, she should fire her immediately.

“More than ever during the COVID-19 public health crisis, Michigan taxpayers and the families that MDHHS is meant to serve deserve answers from Andrea Taverna. They deserve a department they can trust. So far Whitmer’s delivered neither.”

The OAG is investigating the state’s secret decision to award a no-bid contract to organizations affiliated with Kolehouse Strategies, organizations closely linked to Governor Whitmer’s political campaign efforts. According to the OAG, Kolehouse sent the Department an allegedly “unsolicited” Statement of Work for contact tracing, which Taverna and MDHHS turned into a work plan – an arrangement investigators “do not consider ...typical.”

The contract was subsequently signed without going through the legally required State Emergency Operations Center approval process.

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According to the OAG, “many of the interviewees” inside the department referred questions to Taverna, who through her attorney refuses to cooperate.

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