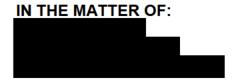
STATE OF MICHIGAN

MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



Reg No.: 2012-13881 Issue No.: 2009, 4031 Case No.:

Hearing Date: February 23, 2012

Macomb County DHS (20)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Colleen M. Mamelka

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon the Claimant's request for a hearing. After due notice, a hearing was held in Warren, Michigan on Thursday, February 23, 2012. The Claimant appeared and testified.

Services ("Department").

ISSUE

Whether the Department proper ly determined that the Claimant was not disabled for purposes of the Medical Assistance ("MA-P") and St ate Disability Assistance ("SDA") benefit program?

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Administrative Law Judge, based on t he competent, material, and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

- 1. The Claimant submitted an application on for public assistance seeking MA-P, retroactive to June 2011, and SDA benefits on September 27, 2011.
- 2. On November 2, 2011, the Medical Re view Team ("MRT") found the Claimant not disabled. (Exhibit 1, pp. 1, 2)
- 3. The Department notified the Claimant of the MRT determination.
- 4. On November 21, 2011, the Department received the Claimant's timely written request for hearing.

- 5. On January 13, 2012, the State H earing Review T eam ("SHRT") found the Claimant not disabled. (Exhibit 4)
- 6. The Claimant alleged physical disabling impairments due to shortness of breath, congestive heart failure, and rheumatoid arthritis.
- 7. The Claimant alleged mental disabling impairm ents due to depression and anxiety.
- 8. At the time of hearing, the Claimant was years old with a birth date; was 5'4½" in height; and weighed approximately 265 pounds.
- 9. The Claimant is a high school graduat e with some c ollege and an emplo yment history in quality control and as a waitress.
- 10. The Claimant's impairments have lasted, or are expected to last, continuously for a period of 12 months or longer.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Medical Assistance program is established by Subchapter XIX of Chapter 7 of The Public Health & Welfare Act, 42 USC 1397, and is administered by the Department of Human Services, formerly known as the Family Independence Agency, pursuant to MCL 400.10 et seq. and MCL 400.105. Department policies are found in the Bridge's Administrative Manual ("BAM"), the Bridges Elig ibility Manual ("BEM"), and the Bridges Reference Tables ("RFT").

Disability is defined as the inability to do any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental im pairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expect ed to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months. 20 CFR 416.905(a). The person claiming a physical or mental disability has the burden to esta blish it through the use of competent medical evidence from qualified medical sources such as his or her medical history. clinical/laboratory findings, diagnosis/prescri bed treatment, prognosis for recovery and/or medical assessment of ability to do work-related ac tivities o r ability to reason and make appropriate mental adjustments, if a mental disability is alleged. 20 CRF 413.913. An individual's subjective pain complaints are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to establish disab ility. 20 CF R 416.908; 2 0 CFR 4 16.929(a). Similarly, conclusor y statements by a physician or mental health professional that an individual is disabled or blind, absent supporting medical evidence, is insufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.927.

When determining disability, the federal regulations require several factors to be considered including: (1) the location/du ration/frequency/intensity of an applicant's pain; (2) the type/dosage/effectiveness/side effects of any medication the applicant takes to relieve pain; (3) any treatment other than pain medication that the applicant has received to relieve pain; and (4) the effect of the applicant's pain on his or her ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(3). The applicant's pain must be assessed to determine the extent of his or her functional limitation(s) in light of the objective medical evidence presented. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(2).

In order to determine whether or not an individual is disabled, federal regulations require a five-step sequential evaluation process be utilized. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(1). The five-step analysis requires the trier of fact to cons ider an individual's current work activit y; the severity of the impairment(s) both in duration and whether it meets or equals a listed impairment in Appendix 1; residual functional capacity to det ermine whether an individual can perform past relev ant work; and residual functional capacity along with vocational factors (i .e. age, education, and work experienc e) to determine if an individual can adjust to other work. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4); 20 CFR 416.945.

If an individual is found disabled, or not disabled, at any step, a determination or decision is made with no need evaluate subsequent steps. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). If a determination cannot be made that an individual is disabled, or not disabled, at particular step, the next step is required. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). If an impairment does not meet or equal a listed impairment, an indi vidual's residual functional capacity is assessed before moving from step three to step four. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4); 20 CFR 416.945. Residual f unctional capacity is the most an indiv idual can do despite the limitations based on all relevant evidence. 20 CF R 945(a)(1). An individual's residua I functional capacity assessment is evaluat ed at both steps four and five. 20 CF 416.920(a)(4). In determining disability, an individual's functional capacity to perform basic work activities is evaluated and if found that the individ ual h as the ability to perform basic work activities without significant limitation, disability will not be found. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(iv). In general, the indi vidual has the responsibility to prove disability. 20 CFR 4 16.912(a). An impair ment or combi nation of impairments is not severe if it does not signific antly limit an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.921(a). The in dividual has the responsibility to provide evidence of prior work experience; efforts to work; and any other factor showing how the impairment affects the ability to work. 20 CFR 416.912(c)(3)(5)(6).

In addition to the above, when evaluating mental impairments, a special technique is utilized. 2 0 CFR 416.920a(a). First, an individual's pertinent symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings are evaluated to determine whether a medically determinable mental impairment exists. 20 CFR 416.920a(b)(1). When a medically determinable mental impairment is established, the symptoms, signs and laboratory findings that substantiate the impairment are documented to include the individual's significant history, laboratory

findings, and functional limitations. 20 CFR 416.920a(e)(2). Functional limitation(s) is assessed based upon the extent to whic h the impairment(s) interferes with an individual's ability to func tion independently, appropriately , effectively, and on sustained basis. Id.; 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(2). Chronic m ental disorders, structured settings, medication, and other treatment and the effect on the overall degree of functionality is considered. 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(1). In addition, four broad functional areas (activities of daily living; social f unctioning; concentration, persistence or pace; and episodes of decompensat ion) are consider ed when deter mining an individual's degree of functional limitation. 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(3). The degree of limitation for the first three functional areas is rated by a five point scale: none, mild, moderate, marked, and extreme. 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(4). A four point scale (none, one or two, three, four or more) is used to rate the degree of limitation in the fourth functional area. *Id.* The last point on each scale repr esents a degree of limitation t hat is incompatible with the ability to do any gainful activity. Id.

After the degree of functional limitation is determined, the severity of the mental impairment is determined. 20 CFR 416.920a(d). If severe, a determination of whether the impairment meets or is the equivalent of a listed mental disorder is made. 20 CF R 416.920a(d)(2). If the severe mental im pairment does not meet (or equal) a listed impairment, an individual's residual functional capacity is assessed. 20 CF R 416.920a(d)(3).

As outlined above, the first step looks at the i ndividual's current work activity. In the record presented, the Claiman t is not involved in substantial gainful activity and, therefore, is not ineligible for disability benefits under Step 1.

The severity of the Claimant's alleged impa irment(s) is considered under St ep 2. The Claimant bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairments. In order to be considered disabled for MA purposes, the impairment must be seevere. 20 CFR 916. 920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 916.920(b). An impairment, or combination of impairments, is severe if it significantly limits an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities regardless of age, education and work experience. 20 CFR 916.920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 916.920(c). Basic work activities means the abilities and aptitudes necessary to do most jobs. 20 CFR 916.921(b). Examples include:

- 1. Physical functions such as wa lking, standing, sitting, lifting, pushing, pulling, reaching, carrying, or handling;
- 2. Capacities for seeing, hearing, and speaking;
- 3. Understanding, carrying out, and remembering simple instructions;

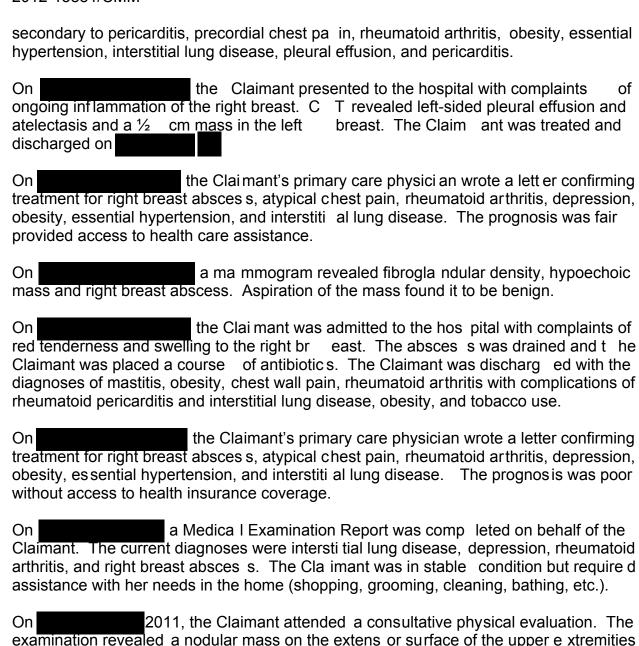
- Use of judgment;
- 5. Responding appropriately to supervision, co-workers and usual work situations; and
- 6. Dealing with changes in a routine work setting.

ld.

The second step allows for dismissal of a disability claim obviously lacking in medical merit. Higgs v Bowen, 880 F2d 860, 862 (CA 6, 1988). The severity requirement may still be employed as an admin istrative convenience to screen out claims that are totally groundless solely from a medical standpoint. Id. at 863 citing Farris v Sec of Health and Human Services, 773 F2d 85, 90 n.1 (CA 6, 1985). An impairment qualifies as non-severe only if, regardless of a claimant's age, education, or work experience, the impairment would not affect the claimant's ability to work. Salmi v Sec of Health and Human Services, 774 F2d 685, 692 (CA 6, 1985).

In the present case, the Claimant alleges disability due to shortness of breath, congestive heart failure, rheumatoid arthritis, anxiety, and depression. In support of her claim, older records from as early were submitted which document as treatment/diagnoses of acute viral, recurrent aseptic meningitis, rheumatoid arthritis, hypertension, headaches, right flank pain, obesity, deep vein thrombosis, depression, blood work confirmed high cholesterol and rheumatoid arthritis with On a factor of 663. Progress/treatment notes from show treatment for rheumatoid arthritis, pain, depres sion, viral meningitis, water retention, and right breast abscess. the Claimant presented to the hospital with complaints of chest

the Claimant presented to the hospital with complaints of chest pain. A CT showed evidence of pericarditis, pleural effu sion, and interstitial lung disease. On an echoca rdiogram was abnormal showing s inus tachycardia and probable inferior infarct. A Pulmonary Function Test was performed which showed Forced Expiratory Volume at 1 s econd ("F EV₁") of 1.62 before bronchodilator and a Forced Vital Capacity ("FVC") of 2.00. Post bronchodilator the FEV₁ was 1.68 and the FVC 2.02. The total lung capacity was at the lower limits of normal. The diagnoses were moderately severe obstructive ventilatory defect with mild air trapping; mild impairment in gas exchange; and total lung capacity at lower limit of normal. The Claimant was discharged on with the diagnoses of chest pain



On this same date, the Claimant attended a cons ultative mental status evaluation. The diagnosis was depression (improved wit h medication) with a Global Assessment Functioning ("GAF") of 55 to 6 0. There were no psychiatric problems that would interfere with the Claimant's ability to perform work-related activities.

and +1 edema in both lower extremities noting limited range of motion. There were no

heart failure. The diagnoses wer

symptoms of angina or signs of congestive

rheumatoid arthritis and pericarditis.

As previously noted, the Claim ant bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairment(s). As summarized above, the Claimant has presented medical evidence establishing that she does have some physical and mental limitations on her ability to perform basic work activities. The medical evidence has established that the Claimant has an impairment, or combination thereof, that has more than a *de minimus* effect on the Claimant's basic work activities. Further, the impairments have lasted continuous ly for twelve months; therefore, the Claimant is not disqualified from receipt of MA-P benefits under Step 2.

In the third step of the seque ntial an alysis of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the Claimant's impairment, or co mbination of impairm ents, is listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404. The Claim ant has alleged physical and mental dis abling impairments due to muscu loskeletal pain, s hortness of breath, congestive heart failure, rheumatoid arthritis, obesity, anxiety, and depression.

Listing 1.00 (musculoskeletal sy stem), Listing 3.00 (respirat ory system), Li sting 4.00, Listing 12.00 (mental disorder s), and Listing 14.00 (immune system disorders) were considered in light of the objective evidenc e. The objective medical records establish physical impairments; however, these record s do not meet the intent and severity requirements of a listing, or its equivalen t. There was no ev idence of persistent inflammation or deformity of one or more major weight-bear ing joints resulting in the inability to ambulate effectively or objective find ings regarding the inability to perform fine and gross movements effectively. T here was no evidence e of inflammation or deformity in one or more peripheral joints with involovement of two or more organs/body systems (severe) or at least two signs/symptom s of severe fatigue, fevere, malaise, or involuntary weight loss. The records di d not show ankylosing spondy litis or other spondyloarthropathies or repeated manifestations of inflammato ry arthritis. Mentally, the Claimant is able to meet her activities of daily living, including driving, with some mild restriction. In c onsideration of t he Claimant's depression and anxiet y, social functioning, concentration, persis tence or pa ce is moderately im pacted. The record does not contain episodes of decompensati on of extended durati on. In addition, although t he Claimant suffers with depressive symptoms, the objective findings do establish a residual disease process that shows even a minim al increas e in mental demands or change in environment woul d cause the Claimant to deompensate or require a highly supportive living arrangement. Ultimately, the record does not support a finding of at least two marked limitations as detailed in 12.04 and 12.06. Accordingly, the Claimant can not be found disabled, or not disabled, at Step 3.

Before considering the fourth step in the sequential analysis, a determination of the individual's residual functional capacity ("RFC") is made. 20 CFR 416.945. An individual's RFC is the most he/she canstill do on a sustained bas is despite the limitations from the impairment(s). *Id.* The total limiting effects of all the impairments, to include those that are not severe, are considered. 20 CFR 416.945(e).

To determine the physical demands (exertional requirements) of work in the national economy, jobs are c lassified as sedentary, light, medium, heavy, and very heavy. 2 0 CFR 416.967. Sedentary work involves lifting of no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. 20 CFR 416.967(a). Although a sedentary job is defined as one which involves sitting, a certain amount of walking and standing is often necessary in carrying out job duties. Id. Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are r equired occasionally and other sedentary criteria are met. Light work involves lifting no more than 20 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing up to 10 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(b). Even though weight lifted may be very little, a job is in this category when it requires a good deal of walking or standing, or when it invo Ives sit ting most of the time with some pushing and pulling of arm or leg controls. Id. To be considered capable of performing a full or wide range of light work, an individual must have the ability to do substantially all of these activities. Id. A n individual capable of light work is also capable of sedentary work, unless there are additionally limiting factors such as loss of fin dexterity or inability to sit for long periods of time. *Id.* Medium work involves lifting no more than 50 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 25 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(c). An individual capable of performing medium work is also capable of light and sedentary work. *Id.* Heavy work involves lifting no more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of object is weighing up to 50 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(d). A n individual capable of heavy work is also c apable of medium, light, and sedentary work. *Id.* Finally, very heavy work involves lifting objects weighing more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing 50 pounds or more. 20 CFR 416.967(e). An individual capable of very heavy work is able to perform work under all categories. *Id.*

Limitations or restrictions which affect the ability to meet the demands of jobs other than requirements, i.e. sitting, strength demands (exertional standing, walk ing, lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling) are consider ed nonexertional. 20 CFR 416.969a(a). In considering whether an individual can perform past relevant work, a comparis on of the individual's residual functional c apacity with the demands of past relevant work. an individual can no longer do past relevant work the same residual functional capacity assessment along with an individual's a ge, education, and work experience is considered to determine whether an individual can adjust to other work which exists in the national economy. Id. Examples of non-exertional limitations or restrictions include difficulty to function due to nervousness, anxiousness, or depression; difficulty maintaining attention or concentration; difficulty understanding or remembering detailed instructions; difficulty in seeing or hearing; difficulty tolerating some physic al feature(s) of certain work settings (i.e. ca n't tolerate dust or fumes); or di fficulty performing the manipulative or postur al functions of some work such as reaching, handling, stooping, climbing, crawling, or crouching. 20 CFR 4 16.969a(c)(1)(i) – (vi). If the imp airment(s) and related symptoms, such as pain, only affect the ability to perform the non-exertional

aspects of work-related activities, the rules in Appendix 2 do not direct factual conclusions of disabled or not disabled. 20 CF R 416.969a(c)(2). The determination of whether disability exists is bas ed upon the principles in the appropriate sections of the regulations, giving consideration to the rules for specific case situations in Appendix 2. *Id.*

In this case, the Claimant alleged disability based on musculoskeletal pain, shortness of breath, congestive heart failure, rheumatoid arthritis, obesity, anxiety, and depression. The Claimant testified that s he is able to walk less than one bloc k; has trouble gripping and/or grasping; sit for 2 to 3 hours with ex tremity swelling, lift/carry 10 po unds; stand less than 2 hours; and is unable to bend and squat. The objective medical findings do not address specific limitations but note that she needs assistance with her needs in the home. Mentally, the Claimant is in stable condition and able to perform her activities of daily living. Regarding, social functioni ng, concentration, persis tence, or pace, the Claimant was not markedly limite d in any area and as such, the degree of limitation is mild. The Claimant was found mentally able to engage in work-related activities. Accordingly, the degree of limitation is mild to moderate. And finally, the record reflects that the Claimant's mental condition is stable without evidence of repeated episodes of decompensation. Applying the f our point s cale, the Claimant 's degree of limitation in the fourth functional area is at most a 1. After review of the entire record to include the Claimant's testimony, it is found that the Claimant mainta ins the residual functional capacity to perform at least unskilled, limit ed, sedentary work as defined by 20 CFR 416.967(a). Limitations being the alternation between sitting and standing at will.

The fourth step in analyzing a dis ability claim requires an assessment of the Claimant's residual f unctional capacity ("RFC") and pas t relevant employment. 20 CF R 416.920(a)(4)(iv). An individual is not disabled if he/she can perform past relevant work. Id.; 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3). Past relevant work is work that has been performed within the past 15 years that was a substantial gainful activity and that lasted long enough for the individual to learn the position. 20 CF R 416.960(b)(1). Vocational factors of age, education, and work experience, and whether the past relevant employment exists in significant numbers in the national economy is not considered. 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3).

The Claimant's prior work history consists of work in quality control and as a waitress. In consideration of the Claimant's testimony and the Occupational Code, the Claimant's prior work in quality control is classified as unskilled, light work while the waitress position is considered semi-skilled light work. If the impairment or combination of impairments does not limit physical or mental ability to do basic work activities, it is not a severe impairment(s) and disability does not exist. 20 CFR 416.920. In light of the entire record and the Claimant's RFC (see above), it is found that the Claimant is unable to perform past relevant work.

In Step 5, an assessment of the individua I's residual functional capace ity and age. education, and work experience is consider ed to determine whet her an adjustment to other work can be made. 20 CFR 416.920(4)(v). At the time of hearing, the Claimant years old thus consider ed to be a y ounger individual for MA-P purposes. The Claimant is a high school gr aduate who is currently a ttending college on a part-tim e basis. Dis ability is found if an individual is unable to adjust to other work. point in the analys is, the burden shifts from the Claimant to the Department to present proof that the Claimant has the residual capacity to substantial gainful employment. 20 CFR 416.960(2); Richardson v Sec of Healt h and Human Services, 735 F2d 962, 964 (CA 6, 1984). While a vocational exper t is not required, a f inding supported by substantial evidence that the individual has the vocational qualifications to perform O'Banner v Sec of Health and Human specific jobs is needed to meet the burden. Services, 587 F2d 321, 323 (CA 6, 1978). Medica I-Vocational guidelines found at 20 CFR Subpart P, Appendix II, may be used to satisfy the burden of proving that the individual can perform specific jobs in the national economy. Heckler v Campbell, 461 US 458, 467 (1983); Kirk v Secretary, 667 F2d 524, 529 (CA 6, 1981) cert den 461 US 957 (1983). The age for younger individuals (under 50) ge nerally will not serious ly affect the ability to adjust to other work. 20 CFR 416.963(c)

In this case, the objective findings reveal t hat the Claimant suffers from right breast abscess, atypical c hest pain, rheumatoid arthritis, obesity, depression, essential hypertension, and interstitial lung diseas e. Mentally, the Claimant's condition was stable however; physically, the Claimant required as sistance with shopping, grooming, cleaning, and bathing. After review of the entire record, and in consideration of the Claimant's age, education, work experience, and RFC, finding no contradiction with the Claimant's non-exertional limitations, and using the Medical-Vocational Guidelines [20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix II] as a guide, specifically Rule 201.27 and 201.28, it is found that the Claimant is not disabled for purposes of the MA-P program at Step 5.

The State Disability Assist ance program, which pr ovides financial assistance for disabled persons, was established by 2004 PA 344. The Department administers the SDA program purusant to MCL 400.10 *et seq.* and Mich Admin Code, Rules 400.3151 – 400.3180. Department policie s are found in BAM, BEM, and RFT. A person is considered disabled for SDA purposes if the person has a phys ical or menta I impariment which m eets federal SSI dis ability standards for at least ninety days. Receipt of SSI or RSDI benefit s based on disability or blindness, or the receipt of MA benefits based on disability or blindness automatically qualifies an individual as disabled for purposes of the SDA program.

In this cas e, the Claimant is found not disabled for purposes of the MA-P program; therefore, she is found not disabled for purposes of SDA benefit program.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above findings of fact and conclusions of law finds the Claimant not disabled for purposes of the MA-P and SDA benefit programs.

Accordingly, It is ORDERED:

The Department's determination is AFFIRMED.

Colleen M. Mamelka
Colleen M. Mamelka
Administrative Law Judge
For Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: March 6, 2012

Date Mailed: March 6, 2012

NOTICE: Michigan Administrative Hearing Syst em (MAHS) may order a rehearing or reconsideration on either its own motion or at the request of a par ty within 30 days of the mailing date of this Dec ision and Order. MAHS will not order a rehearing or reconsideration on the Department's mo tion where the final decis ion cannot be implemented within 90 days of the filing of the original request. (60 days for FAP cases)

The Claimant may appeal the Decision and Order to Circuit Court within 30 days of the receipt of the Decision and Order or, if a ti mely request for rehearing was made, within 30 days of the receipt date of the rehearing decision.

Claimant may request a rehearing or reconsideration for the following reasons:

- A rehearing <u>MAY</u> be granted if there is newly discovered evidence that could affect the outcome of the original hearing decision.
- A reconsideration **MAY** be granted for any of the following reasons:
 - misapplication of manual policy or law in the hearing decision,
 - typographical errors, mathematical error, or other obvious errors in the hearing decision that effect the substantial rights of the claimant:
 - the failure of the ALJ to address other relevant issues in the hearing decision.

Request must be submitted through the local DHS office or directly to MAHS by mail at Michigan Administrative Hearings

Re consideration/Rehearing Request

P. O. Box 30639

Lansing, Michigan 48909-07322

CMM/cl

