

Dear committee members -

As the father of a man on the sex offender registry, I oppose HB 5679.

My son's offense took place when he was a teenager. He was sentenced to three weekends in jail and was put on the registry. Over the years, as a registrant, being able to obtain and keep a job, find housing, and fit in with other people has been almost impossible. The situation has caused depression, severe anxiety and alcohol abuse.

Please vote against HB 5679.

Walt Byers

Petoskey, MI 49770

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Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Our son was convicted of a high misdemeanor sex crime as a first semester college freshman. At the time someone told us that if you get a toe caught under the sex offender steam roller, you can't pull it out - "the thing just keeps on rolling and pulling more and more of you under until you're pretty much flattened." Years later, I can say that is a fair characterization.

One of the many heartbreaking consequences of our son's status under current law, both for him and our family, is that no residential alcohol treatment program can accept him despite a serious, life-threatening alcohol addiction - a problem fueled by the shame and roadblocks he faces due to his "sex offender" status.

In the past we had "The War on Drugs", "Tough On Crime", and "Three Strikes You're Out", slogans that represent laws and policies that most politicians, government officials and citizens alike now recognize as misguided approaches to criminal justice that caused an explosion in the prison population as well as significant collateral damage. Now we've moved to sex offender registries (which are growing by leaps and bounds) and corresponding laws based on fear, misinformation, horror, and politics - and which have been declared unconstitutional.

I repeat: Michigan's sex offender laws have been declared unconstitutional. They need to be changed. Please enact laws based on science, that are evidence-based and that are just.

Thank you,

Nancy Byers

Petoskey, MI