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June 21, 2021

Honorable Graham Filler
Michigan House of Representatives
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Re: House Judiciary Committee

Dear Representative Filler:

I have served as a Guardian Ad Litem in the Oakland County Probate Court since June 2014. During my tenure, I have had the opportunity to witness the very good and the very bad in the area of guardianship and conservatorship. I feel that there are proper and appropriate critiques of the public guardianship and conservatorship system, but I also see this system as vitally important. Accordingly, I wanted to communicate my personal opposition to **House Bills 4847, 4848, 4849, and 4850**.

I'm concerned that these attempts at reform, will drive more people out of the profession and put the individuals protected by these guardians and conservators at much greater risk. Proper protocols and critiques could benefit the system, but the House Bills, as written do not serve to protect individuals, but rather, in my view, shrink the resources available to people that have no other options (for which there are many). I cannot support these bills and urge you to hold them in your committee.

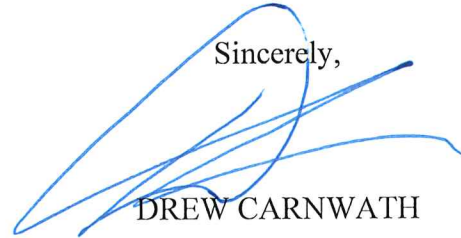
Before we throw up additional barriers for these dedicated public servants to deal with, the Michigan Legislature should be looking at a funding mechanism to pay them for the services they provide. Professional guardians are no less of a valuable part of Michigan's judicial system and the state's human services safety net, than court appointed lawyers. However, instead of funding them in a similar fashion for indigent criminal lawyers, Michigan has ignored their financial plight for decades. Now this legislative package will make their jobs even harder, without providing one cent of state funding to support their work. As many as 4-5,000 indigent people in Michigan have the benefit of a court-appointed guardian where the guardian must work for free.

Representative Filler, you are a fellow attorney, so imagine if the state told you how many clients you could work with while not paying you for 30-60 percent of your cases. That is not a sustainable business model, yet the State of Michigan demands this from our guardians.

These bills are not a reasonable solution to address any perceived problems within the system and should be shelved.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

DREW CARNWATH