

Date: May 5, 2020

To: House Judiciary Committee Members

Subject: HB 5679

For nearly two years, I have been meeting once a month with individuals whose names are listed on Michigan's Sex Offender Registry or who have loved ones listed on the registry. Every month, I am reminded of how much harm the registry does. Some remain unemployed or underemployed. They are limited as to where they can live and work. Some cannot attend school events in which their children participate, which may include, among other things, performances, sporting events, and graduations. Some report frequent harassment, such as garbage thrown in their yard.

This isn't new news. We've known about these problems for years. They were confirmed and ruled unconstitutional by two federal courts in 2015 and 2016. Finally, in 2019, with the blessing of the judge in the case, a fairly large group representing state agencies sat down with advocates for change and began discussing how to create a more effective law. By all accounts, the group was making progress. There was agreement on key issues. Then, suddenly, without explanation, the state pulled out of those negotiations, leaving the judge to make a decision.

HB 5679 does not adequately address the problems with the current law. Having waited this long to address the constitutional issues, there is no apparent reason to rush through a bill that doesn't solve the problems. We need to slow down, take a deep breath, reconvene the working group, and write a bill that does address these serious constitutional shortcomings.

Sincerely,

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cc: Rep. James Lower, Melissa Sweet, Governor Gretchen Whitmer