



September 23, 2019

Chairman Filler and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

As Ward 3 City Commissioner in the City of Muskegon, I have seen firsthand how an individual's criminal record can impede their quality of life and ability to provide themselves and their family a safe and stable environment. Residents face issues with employment, custody, loan opportunities, education and much more. That is why I am encouraged and find hope in your efforts to help citizens get back on their feet and reintegrated into our communities.

I and City of Muskegon offer our full support of the effort to reform the expungement process. I will use my voice as a city leader to advocate for making Michigan a leader in this area and set an example for other states to follow.

Currently the expungement process can be expensive and confusing, resulting in only 6.5% of eligible individuals attempting to have their record expunged. Allowing for those crimes that are eligible, to be automatically expunged after 10 years is a critical step toward putting individuals on a path for better employment and higher wages. Additionally, such a change will expand education and housing opportunities for the individuals and ultimately lower Michigan's recidivism rate.

Increasing the number of felonies and misdemeanors that can be set aside, creating a process to deal with marijuana convictions that would now be legal under the law, reducing the misdemeanor waiting period, and making some traffic offenses eligible for expungement, will undoubtedly change the lives for thousands of Michigan citizens. As Michigan, and the city of Muskegon, move forward with medical and recreational marijuana – without expungement reform we will be perpetuating an unjust system that greatens the divide in our communities. Proceeding without expungement would be a misstep. The opportunity and job creation that currently comes with marijuana businesses is fruitful, but at the status quo, for whom and at what cost?

I cannot emphasize enough the positive impact this issue will have on the residents and businesses of City of Muskegon. I whole heartily support your efforts to reform the expungement process in Michigan and extend my support for House Bills 4980-4985.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Debra Warren".

Debra Warren

Ward 3 City Commissioner

City of Muskegon