



CITY OF BATTLE CREEK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

September 23, 2019

Chairman Filler and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

As Mayor of the City of Battle Creek, I have seen firsthand how an individual's criminal record can impede employment opportunities, but when given a second chance, these individuals are able to rise above their past. That is why I am extremely grateful for your efforts to help citizens get back on their feet and reintegrated into our communities.

As Mayor, I offer my 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.

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

Sincerely,

Mark A. Behnke
Mayor