

September 20, 2019

Chairman Filler and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

As Mayor of the City of Jackson, 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 grateful for your efforts to help citizens get back on their feet and reintegrated into our communities.

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 eligible crimes 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 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 lives for thousands of Michigan citizens.

We have already taken steps to work on this issue in the City of Jackson. Earlier this year, we removed the check box for felonies on city employment applications and reformed the way by which we investigate criminal history. Through the Financial Stability Network, we supported two highly successful expungement fairs that worked to clear records and provide better access to opportunity for more than 150 individuals. The more that we can automate, and reduce barriers to, this process the better.

I cannot emphasize enough the positive impact this issue will have on the residents and businesses of Jackson as we work to create opportunity for all. I support your continued efforts to reform the expungement process in Michigan and extend my support for House Bills 4980-4985.

Sincerely,



Derek Dobies
Mayor