

May 12, 2020

Regarding HB 5679

Judiciary Committee Members:

This is my testimony regarding how the Michigan SORA has affected our family for the last 21 years.

This is extremely personal for me. I have children who have been both victims and offenders. My son has been on the registry since age 19; he is now 40. I also have a daughter (now age 42) who was sexually assaulted at age 15 by our other daughter's ex-husband who is also on the Michigan SORA. This testimony will address my son. Being on the registry has been a tremendous cause of shame and anxiety for him that has done nothing but increased over the years as additional provisions were added to the original law. His belief that his life could actually change for the better has been crushed over and over again when he thought that he might have a decent job only to find out that they would not even consider him because of this conviction. We have tried very hard to encourage him but it has been extremely difficult to do because the Michigan SORA has stripped him of hope even though he served his time and has not been a repeat offender now for 20 years. The fact that there is no way to get off this registry even after many, many years seems excessive and oppressive when there is no repeat offense committed.

Along with the joblessness, the extreme difficulty in finding a suitable living arrangement caused his anxiety to skyrocket as we hunted for anything that would be 1,000 feet away from schools and parks even though his offense at age 19 had nothing to do with minors. The difficulty caused my husband and me much anxiety and frustration also in that it was very difficult to determine if a place was in fact far enough away. Calling police stations to determine this was often times met with rude or insensitive people who had much better things to do with their time. My husband and I finally decided that we would attempt to buy a home that our son could rent from us so have first-hand experience on how difficult it is to find anything that fits within the acceptable area. Even realtors and police were often admittedly uncertain. Our son has felt like a social leper despite the fact that he has not committed another sex offense. This has contributed to a vicious cycle of depression and anxiety even leading to hospitalizations. Our son's anxiety, depression and hopelessness has been extremely difficult for me to endure as a mother causing me many sleepless nights praying to God for hope and help for him.

I am urging you to adopt legislation that is based on facts and science regarding sexual abuse crimes and recidivism and what actually works to protect the public from sexual predators. I also am urging you to support legislation that can do this without totally ruining the life of people who made a horrible mistake but have long since paid their debt to society and pose no significant threat to society based on facts and science. I have no legal or political background, but after reading HB 5679 it appears that it is not significantly different than the previous SORA that has been found to be unconstitutional and I absolutely oppose it.

Sincerely,

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