



A.R.R.O.

Advocacy, Re-entry, Resources, Outreach

510 W Ottawa ♦ 2nd Floor ♦ Lansing ♦ MI ♦ 48933

Phone: (517) 999-2894 ♦ Fax: (517) 999-2897 ♦ www.nwlansing.org

ARRO Staff

Monica Jahner
ARRO Outreach Worker
monica@nwlansing
moni@att.net

Peggy Vaughn-Payne
Executive Director
peggy@nwlansing.org

ARRO is a program of:
NorthWest Initiative
info@nwlansing.org
www.nwlansing.org



CARE VOICE
ADVOCATE

CHOICES

FAIR CHANCES

September 24, 2019

Representative Graham Filler
House of Representatives
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Re: HB 4980-85

Chairman Filler and the respected members of the House Judiciary, I thank you for hearing testimony on the bill package to expand set asides in a number of ways. I also thank you for making room for those most directly impacted by the issue to have a voice. For so long, we have not. For so long, we have suffered invisibly to make ends meet and provide for our loved ones long after our sentence technically ended. I am here to tell you today. It never ends. We are punished by a thousand cuts each time we are denied a job, or a place to live, for a crime that was committed sometimes decades ago. Our loved ones are punished. Our communities are punished as a result of lost wages, lost housing, lost family.

My name is Monica Jahner and in 1978, I became the first person in the State of Michigan to get life without parole on a conspiracy to murder charge where no one died. I am not eligible for expungement under the current or proposed law because my crime carried "life".

I spent 30 years locked up for a crime I did not commit, and had not intended to commit. I was simply the naïve pawn in my father, my incredibly abusive father's scheme to kill his wife. Yet, my father, my father who manipulated me and abused me, was not sentenced. He fled to the Bahamas. It was I, a young woman, whom the state put their full efforts behind convicting. Evidence was hidden. Details left out. I was defenseless without the money for an attorney. I was convicted and sentenced to life.

I have been on the front lines of the campaign for Clean Slate and set aside expansion for the last year, but I have been involved in ensuring that people come home to opportunity from the very day I stepped out of prison in 2007. I started a grassroots reentry program, I was elected to the Community Corrections Advisory board, I created a day reporting program that works to reduce incarceration and re-incarceration. I have worked with judges, legislators, parole boards, and probation officers to ensure that the system does not produce the same miscarriage of justice that it did in my case. I mentor youth. And I was recently appointed to the Governor's Task Force on Pretrial and Jail. Each and every day I have been out, almost 12 years now, I dedicate my life to bettering the world for others. Each and every day I am out, I am helping people get out and stay out.

And yet, I am still not free. I still struggle with work opportunities, to make a living wage. I still struggle with how to contribute to my family while pursuing my passion for justice. The facts are clear. Almost nobody goes back to prison after ten years with no other crimes. And people, like myself, who have served over ten years inside, have the lowest recidivism rate in the country. To arbitrarily eliminate the opportunity of a clean slate based on a crime without access to context or circumstance, and without acknowledging the work that someone has done to beat the odds, stay out, and do good, is a travesty. Further, it destroys lives and families and communities.

Through community engagement and mobilization, NWI advances the development of healthy, vibrant communities by building capacity to identify needs and formulate strategies to create change.



A.R.R.O.

Advocacy, Re-entry, Resources, Outreach

510 W Ottawa ♦ 2nd Floor ♦ Lansing ♦ MI ♦ 48933

Phone: (517) 999-2894 ♦ Fax: (517) 999-2897 ♦ www.nwlansing.org

ARRO Staff

Monica Jahner
ARRO Outreach Worker
monica@nwlansing
moni@att.net

Peggy Vaughn-Payne
Executive Director
peggy@nwlansing.org

I ask this committee to please right the injustices that are now a part of the justice system. Allow me and others convicted of serious crimes the opportunity to stop being defined by my worst mistake.

ARRO is a program of:
NorthWest Initiative
info@nwlansing.org
www.nwlansing.org



• CARE • VOICE
• ADVOCATE

CHOICES

FAIR CHANCES

Through community engagement and mobilization, NWI advances the development of healthy, vibrant communities by building capacity to identify needs and formulate strategies to create change.