

# Jacobs and Diemer

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**VIA EMAIL ONLY**

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Letter in Support of House Bill 5046/Senate Bill 514

It has been 37 years since Michigan Court Reporters received a raise. The maximum rate court reporters can charge per page of transcript was set in 1986 without any adjustments for inflation or otherwise. This is a problem for court reporters, themselves, as well as attorneys like me who depend on the timely production of transcripts to do my job.

In my role as an appellate attorney, ordering trial and hearing transcripts is a regular feature of my law practice. When I first started my career, court reporters could regularly produce transcripts in 7 to 10 days on an expedited basis, an enormous help when confronting an emergency faced by a client. Now, because of the shortage of court reporters, expedited transcripts are an exception not the rule.

By way of example, my law firm is working on a case that went to trial in July of 2022. The transcripts were ordered immediately and paid for up front. To date, we have received two of the seven volumes of trial transcripts. Another case went to trial in December of 2022 and we have received even less of those trial proceedings. In a case my firm was just hired for last week, we were given an expected timeline of 90 days for the production of two days of trial. As a result, we will be asking the trial judge to grant our client a new trial based on the collective memories

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of the trial lawyers rather than the transcripts of the proceedings, themselves.

The exceedingly long timeline for the production of transcripts is not the fault of the individual court reporters. Far from it, court reporters are responsive, diligent and dutifully produce transcripts as soon as they can.

The problem is that there are too few of them and they are stretched too thin. The paltry page rate has caused many court reporters to leave the profession while discouraging others from joining.

An increase in the allowable page rate would go a long way toward alleviating the problem many of us in the legal profession face. The two bills under consideration should be passed and signed into law.

In addition to an immediate page rate increase, the bill beneficially includes mandatory cost-of-living increases every 5 years to ensure that the current 37-year wait does not happen again. Mandatory cost-of-living increases are found in many other areas of the law and have proven to be an effective and objective method of accounting for cost-of-living increases.

I would be more than happy to discuss my experiences further with the Criminal Justice Committee as House Bill 5046/Senate Bill 514 is under consideration. Although I am not a criminal practitioner, the rights at stake in criminal proceedings are even more important than what is typically at stake in civil proceedings and a delay in transcript production is assuredly an even bigger problem for criminal law practitioners.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Timothy A. Diemer

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