

Thank you Chairman Webber and members of the House Regulatory Reform Committee. My name is Michael Jay Zwick. I am co-owner and President of Assets International, a licensed and bonded private investigation agency in Southfield. My company does only one thing, locate and recover money from government treasuries, most commonly state unclaimed property divisions. AI is the oldest and largest such company in the state of Michigan. Since its founding in 2001, we have recovered well in excess of \$100 million for individuals, corporations and nonprofits, with the plurality of our clients being here in Michigan.

Given my experience, I am here to support passage of House Bills 5339 and 5340. The whole purpose of the unclaimed property act is to facilitate reunification of assets with their owners. All of the provisions before you today are positive steps in support of that mission. It is a mission that Assets International looks to support, not as the Treasurer's competitor or replacement but as a supplement.

The provision that limits locators' rights to contact and contract with owners greatly expands the pool of parties that can choose to utilize our and other locators' services. The same is true for additional account identifiers. If there is money for a John Smith from Detroit, the odds that Mr. Smith, or his estate if he is deceased, will become aware of and claim his money are close to zero unless someone working on his behalf knows where to start. Some identifying information, such as an associated address will certainly help.

I further endorse an end to the practice of charging locators for the amount of data they get on the list of unclaimed property owners. Our company obtains lists from many unclaimed property divisions as well as a multitude of federal, state and local treasuries that are holding money for unknowing owners. The Michigan Unclaimed Property list is the only one of which I know that charges for volume of a digital record. Further, the cost for Michigan's list is well outside the norm. Of the many lists we acquire from across the country, the cost, if any is usually no more than \$150. With Michigan, however, we pay roughly \$2,000 twice a year for a list that only has those items over \$5,000. We estimate that acquiring the entire list would cost us \$15,000 a year.

Further, the current policy is an end run around the Michigan Freedom of Information Act. Charges under FOIA, as it is commonly called, are meant to merely reimburse the relevant government for its expenses, including personnel time, to generate the requested record. When processing list requests, the Unclaimed Property division is merely selecting from a database what records it is putting into an Excel spreadsheet. In other words, there is no difference in expense or manpower between copying and pasting a list of all items over \$500 and a list of all items over \$10,000.

By making all information available on one list at one price, just like every other unclaimed property and similar agency in the country does, locators will be able to offer their services to more clients. It is simply not financially feasible for most locators to provide their services to an owner to recover \$5,000 or less. If, however, we see that an owner who has that \$5,000 account also has a number of smaller accounts that in the aggregate make it feasible, we can help that owner.

There is one other point I would like to make. In the fiscal impact study that the House Fiscal Agency submitted, there are repeated references to a potential negative impact to revenue that would result from an increase in the volume and value of claims. Unclaimed property is not revenue. It is not the state's money. The Treasurer is the custodian of unclaimed property and has the statutory right to use the money so long as it can pay all valid claims. Let us not, however, confuse the fulfillment of the

unclaimed property act's mission of reuniting people and entities with their money with depriving the state of something over which it has any right.

I once again thank you for the opportunity to testify today and hope that you will support these two important pieces of legislation and am available to take any questions that you may have.