

February 13, 2024

**TESTIMONY OF THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER (OPD) REGARDING:**

**House Bill No: HB 7053**

**ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL PROCEDURE – EXPUNGEMENT OF CRIMINAL OFFENSES.**

Chairman Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Office of the Public Defender strongly supports HB7053 which proposes an amendment to enhance expungement opportunities for individuals who have completed their sentences and demonstrated a commitment to lawful behaviors. Building upon the positive impact of legislation that increases such opportunities HB7053 is a critical step towards fostering rehabilitation and promoting public safety.

The OPD supports HB7053 based on research indicating that individuals with expunged records exhibit an overall crime rate lower than the general population<sup>1</sup>. Recognizing the success of rehabilitation and the positive impact of providing a pathway to a clear record, this legislation addresses a current impediment in the law. Specifically, individuals with one (1) felony and a misdemeanor conviction are currently barred from ever being eligible for a clean record.

This bill would remove this barrier for individuals who have paid their debt to society and demonstrated rehabilitation over a period of at least ten (10) years. By affording them the opportunity for a clear record, we not only support their reintegration into society but also remove obstacles to employment, stable and safe housing, education, and access to certain government programs and benefits.

In conclusion, the Office of the Public Defender urges the Committee to recommend HB7053 for passage.

Sincerely,

*Curtis R. Pouliot-Alvarez*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://repository.law.umich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3474&context=articles>