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Comment:

I am the Manager for Public Policy and Advocacy Strategy at Detroit People's Platform. I'm writing in support of the changes to MCR 4.201. My organization works closely alongside Black Detroiters who make less than \$30,000/year. To put it simply, this community was devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to require additional support. While the rest of the state has returned to pre-pandemic unemployment levels, the state's largest renter-city lags behind by nearly double the state average of unemployment. Pandemic aids, such as CERA funding and the eviction moratorium are expiring. Recent reports have already shown that eviction filings are on the rise.

Tenants in housing court, unlike many of the landlords who are able to hire experienced, well-paid lawyers, do not have experience with the court system and the fast-paced housing court system quickly leaves them behind. Tenants require and deserve additional time to access resources to ensure their rights as renters are upheld. The changes to MCR 4.201 do just a small amount to make the process fair.

Ensuring a fair process is especially important as many landlords in Detroit in particular do not fulfill their own obligations to provide a clean, livable space for rental and are not compliant with city rental codes. Many tenants also have anecdotal accounts of harassment or difficulty in finding a unit in the case that they are elderly or have children. Maintaining the changes to MCR 4.201 would mean that at least some of these issues could be addressed in court for the benefit of both parties.

To be clear, the proposed rule does not somehow free tenants from their responsibility to pay rent or leave a home in the condition in which they found it. This procedural change simply ensures that both parties in court have similar protections and resources when they are in the court room.