

My name is Jan Little and I am writing on behalf of my organization, Michigan Ability Partners in support of the changes to MCR 4.201, the eviction case court rule that the Supreme Court has proposed. As a non-profit agency that has worked with the homeless population, including many veterans , for over three decades in southeast Michigan, I have seen first-hand how eviction and lack of tenant rights have destroyed individuals and families with disabilities. The eviction process can be too fast, with people not knowing their rights, and people being evicted by landlords who do not follow the law.

Tenants, especially formerly homeless with disabilities, need to be informed of their rights and given resources and time to be properly represented in court. While the Court's proposed changes would not significantly alter the legal eviction process, they would inform tenants of available housing resources and give them slightly more time to access their right to legal counsel and/or search for new housing. This could help tenants avoid possession judgments and bailiff evictions that cause harm to their families and communities. The trauma caused by an eviction can be prevented! In nonpayment of rent cases, the rule changes would help tenants and landlords by building a little more time into the process to access rental assistance. I support the MCR 4.201(B)(3)(c). The legal relationship between a landlord and tenant is a two-way obligation. Plaintiffs should be required to follow the law if they want to leverage the court to evict tenants.

In a very tight rental market like the one we have here in Washtenaw County, the community, including the courts should do everything possible to keep vulnerable households housed.

These changes are well within the authority of the court to supervise the eviction court case process. They don't go as far as I think Michigan law must go to make the eviction process fair for tenants or address the eviction crisis. Even with the proposed changes, evictions will still proceed much faster than other court cases, and still far too fast for many tenants to know their rights or access relief. Power, information, and resource inequities will still characterize tenants' relationships to landlords, judges, and attorneys, and the law will still favor landlords by default. Steadily rising rents and a huge scarcity of decent or affordable rental housing, especially for lower income families of color, only increases the power that landlords have over their tenants and eviction pressures. Within its authority, the Court is giving some basic consideration to the fact that Michigan and the entire country are in a rental housing crisis.

Evictions cause tremendous harm not only to the evicted families, but also the communities they live in. The proposed court rule changes may help reduce some of this harm. Please approve the proposed changes and take all actions within your power to protect the rights and lives of tenants.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jan Little, CEO

Michigan Ability Partners

