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We at Detroit Future City are writing in SUPPORT of the changes to MCR 4.201, the eviction case court rule, that the Supreme Court has proposed. As the convener of the Detroit Neighborhood Housing Compact, we regularly hear from housing practitioners about the value of increased renter protections and calls to make the eviction process fairer for tenants. Evictions harm communities; and disproportionately impact seniors, people with disabilities, and households headed by Black women.

For more equitable and stable neighborhoods, we must address the ongoing eviction crisis, and the proposed court rule amendments are a small step toward this. 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. In nonpayment of rent cases, these rule changes would help both tenants and landlords by building in additional time to access rental assistance. We 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.

As research has shown (see, for example, the U of M Poverty Solutions [Eviction Report](#)), the eviction filing rates in Michigan are very high, especially in cities with large Black and low-income populations like Detroit. The occurrence of default judgments is high, and the proportion of tenants being represented by an attorney is very low. In Detroit, recent [research](#) suggests that modified court procedures have reduced the rate of default judgments and increased tenants' access to counsel, but the vast majority of eviction cases are filed by landlords who do not comply with local health and safety codes. The proposed court rule amendments can better ensure basic tenant protections.

These changes are well within the authority of the court to supervise the eviction court case process. They are a step toward making the eviction process fairer, but Michigan law must go farther to make the eviction process truly fair for tenants, and to address the eviction crisis. Even with the proposed changes, evictions will still proceed much faster than other court cases, and 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 scarcity of decent, 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anika Goss".

Anika Goss
President and CEO