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Comment:

I am writing in support of the Supreme Court's proposed changes to MCR 4.201, the eviction case court rule.

Minimizing evictions is in the best interest of everyone—tenants, landlords and the larger community. The processes implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic under Administrative Order 2020-17 have proven effective in keeping people safely and stably housed in the face of illness, job loss and rapidly rising rents.

Even before the pandemic, Michigan had a remarkably high eviction rate. Clearly, the system has been flawed for decades. We shouldn't return to the previous normal that left so many families devastated and disproportionately harmed Black and disabled people. Instead, we need to learn from the pandemic and build a legal system that works better for everyone.

The proposed changes to MCR 4.201 will further the progress made in reducing evictions during the pandemic and help level the playing field in court, where landlords have a considerable advantage over tenants. Many renters are unaware of their rights and do not have legal representation, as most landlords do.

Additionally, the court process is unduly burdensome to people who are often dealing with multiple crises in addition to an eviction threat, such as job loss, divorce, serious health issues or death in the family, and domestic violence. Retaining the elements of Administrative Order 2020-17 in court rules will help ensure genuine due process for struggling renter families, reducing the odds that they will end up homeless or living in dangerous situations.

Eviction takes the greatest toll on families with children, leading to poor health and education outcomes that affect kids for the rest of their lives. All children deserve a safe, stable home and the opportunity that comes with it, and the proposed changes to MCR 4.201 are a step in the right direction.