



TWENTIETH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT  
OTTAWA COUNTY FAMILY DIVISION

To: Michigan Senate Judiciary Committee  
From: Paul R. Lindemuth, Assistant Juvenile Services Director  
Date: December 4, 2012  
RE: HB5600

This letter is to encourage the committee to act quickly on legislation as passed in the Michigan House, HB5600.

Yesterday, I began my 40<sup>th</sup> year in the juvenile justice field and this is one of the best legislative actions taken to help youth in decades. In my current position I field calls from young people weekly whose lives have been negatively affected by their juvenile record (finding employment, getting into a college, getting housing, joining the military, etc.). I have been successful in helping some by intervening as I can (talking with recruiters, correcting record errors in the state police data base, encouraging kids to tell their "story" [how they've grown, why they are a good citizen now], guiding kids in the current set aside procedures, etc.), but I cannot change the laws or make records disappear. I like the language in the bill and I know it's going to allow real people become fully functioning citizens.

I contrast current law to what was in effect many years ago. As a young man, I got into trouble at age 15. I was allowed to make amends and paid my parents and the community back by never getting into trouble again. Fortunately, I lived in a time when laws reflected the understanding that children make mistakes and should be able to move forward to full citizenship in spite of these mistakes. My "error" never affected my ability to get a job, get into the military or college or find a place to live. Young people today should be given the same consideration.

Today, I received a call from a woman (Mary Lamar) who operates an assisted living facility in Laketown Township, Michigan (near Saugatuck). She has been forced twice to fire a 22 year old woman based on her juvenile record. When she was 15 she stole a cell phone at school and, without an attorney, pled guilty to a felony, Larceny in a Building. She was very successful on probation and has never been in trouble again. Nevertheless, the licensing agency has forced Mrs. Lamar to let her go, despite the fact Mrs. Lamar describes this person as "gifted" in working with her clientele.

I have dozens of other stories, but the bottom line is this: young people who make mistakes must have the opportunity to move forward into adulthood as good citizens. Current law only allows one juvenile adjudication be set aside, and requires the person to wait until they turn 24 years of age. The language in HB5600 would allow young people the opportunity of requesting this at age 18. Thank you for considering this. If I can help in any other way, if anyone would like other examples, or if I can answer any questions, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at work at 616-786-4136 or [plindemuth@miottawa.org](mailto:plindemuth@miottawa.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul R. Lindemuth".

Paul R. Lindemuth

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