



**Testimony Presented to the Senate Committee on Civil Rights, Judiciary, and Public Safety
SB 801 - Eviction Expungement**

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Good afternoon, Chair Chang and members of the Senate Committee on Civil Rights, Judiciary, and Public Safety. My name is Julie Cassidy, Senior Policy Analyst for the Michigan League for Public Policy. The League is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization that promotes economic opportunity for all. We are also the state's Kids Count organization, working as part of a national effort to measure the well-being of children at the state and local levels and to shape efforts that improve their lives.

The League is pleased to support Senate Bill 801. We thank Senator Bayer for sponsoring this important legislation to advance housing justice for renter families.

Eviction filings are public records and many landlords will not rent to families that have ever had an eviction case filed against them—no matter the circumstances. By providing for the sealing and expungement of these records under certain circumstances, Senate Bill 801 would strike the right balance between landlords' right to know about prospective tenants and renters' need for safe, stable housing.

The stigma of an eviction filing drives continued housing instability for the entire family, even when the case does not ultimately result in an eviction. This has a serious impact on health, school, employment and economic security. Eviction has been linked to a host of catastrophic effects, including educational setbacks, job loss, food insecurity, emotional trauma, maternal depression, family separation and foster care placement, poverty, low birth weight, infant mortality, decreased life expectancy, suicide and homelessness.

Ultimately, eviction filings most severely harm children. **In fact, the single greatest predictor of eviction is the presence of a child in the home.**

Landlords may try to evict tenants who call the police or emergency medical services for help, subjecting women and disabled people to a heightened threat of homelessness.

Although Michigan law limits retaliatory eviction, some landlords still file against renters who complain about dangerous property conditions or reject their sexual advances. In some cases,

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landlords have tried to evict families whose children have been poisoned by lead in the home. The scarlet “E” of eviction limits their pool of attainable rentals to older homes that aren’t maintained well, increasing the odds of further lead poisoning by up to 2.5 times, research shows.

Renters with low incomes rarely have the time, legal expertise, or other resources to effectively fight an unfair or blatantly illegal eviction in court, and they almost never have legal representation: Michigan landlords are 17 times more likely than their tenants to have an attorney.

A blemished record shouldn’t punish individuals and their entire families indefinitely. In the long term, overly punitive policy carries unnecessary costs for the larger community. In recognition of these ideals, several years ago, Michigan lawmakers passed “Clean Slate” criminal history expungement legislation. We need to take the same stance regarding access to housing—one of the most basic survival needs. A vote for Senate Bill 801 is a vote for fairness, strong families and stable, safe communities.

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