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May 6, 2020

Judiciary Committee
Michigan State House of Representatives
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Re: HB 5679

Dear Judiciary Committee Members:

In February of 2010, I was released from the Michigan Department of Corrections, after serving 12 ½ years for a conviction of criminal sexual conduct 3rd degree. Upon release, I lived in a small apartment in Pontiac, Michigan. I was committed to living my life responsibly, quietly, and safely. I was intent on being a good citizen and neighbor. I set a goal of being employed in a position where I could serve the community by helping others to the best of my ability.

With the help of an employment agency, I began to work as a drug and alcohol counselor in a facility in Detroit. While working there, I attended many classes and educational programs to learn as much as I could and be the best help to my clients. However, in late 2012 a local television station found out about me by searching the Michigan Sex Offender Registry. They began to secretly follow and film me in my daily activities at work. They did several broadcasts about me being the Michigan Sex Offender Registry.

These broadcasts led to me experiencing many threats and incidents of harassment in the community. It totally disrupted my ability to work in my job without being accosted and threatened. Within a couple of weeks, over 20 completely false and baseless complaints were reported to the police by persons who heard about me from the broadcasts and looked me up on the registry. Their reports were filed with the local police, State Police and FBI, falsely alleging that I was living close to a school or visiting a friend in a neighborhood where people did not want me to be.

Detective Cook of the Birmingham Police contacted me and stated that these complaints were coming in from persons who lived close to a friend I visited sometimes. Trooper Tuer of the Michigan State Police contacted me and advised that I be very careful because of potential danger from people in the community. I literally had to live in seclusion and take other extreme measures from 2012 to the present in order to try to keep myself safe from further harm.

In April of 2014, a person, who found out about me and my address from the registry and broadcasts, broke into my home late at night and stabbed me. My arm was permanently damaged and required major reconstructive surgery. My leg was badly cut. The man falsely claimed self-defense and presented numerous lies to the police. Based on what he said to them, the police declined to press charges against him. However, I was able to obtain a restraining order against him, which is still in effect today. (About a year later, this same offender stabbed another individual who may have been on the registry. As a result, he was convicted and sent to prison, but is already out on parole.)

Because of the notoriety and my injuries, I was forced to leave my job as a counselor in May of 2014. From 2014-2019, I applied for over 100 jobs in various fields, but was unable to obtain employment. Most employers expressed interest in hiring me, but automatically declined because of my listing on the sex offender registry. To be clear, every employer had a policy of not hiring a person on SORA. Many only looked at criminal convictions that occurred in the last ten years, and mine was not counted because it occurred in 1996. However, being currently listed on SORA automatically disqualified me, despite the fact that I had more than all the skills and credentials required and to do an excellent job in the available positions.

In 2015-2016, a neighbor moved to the community where I live. She saw my name and address on the Michigan sex offender registry. She printed out over 40 copies of my sex offender registry page, including my photo, address, conviction, automobile, license, etc. She attached a copy to every mailbox in the condominium complex where I live. She also ran up to me and threatened to kill me if I did not move. The police took no action against her despite her admitting to them what she had done. About a month later, she attempted to hit me with her car when I was walking across a side street near my home. A local judge refused to issue a restraining order against her, saying that she could not issue an order for someone who experienced harm as a result of being on the sex offender registry.

In June of 2016, another neighbor ran up to me out of the blue after learning about me from the registry and news articles. She stated that she wished that I had been killed in the stabbing that took place in April 2014. She screamed that she wanted me dead and could make it happen. I was able to obtain a restraining order against her, but then she was able to recruit others to continue to harass me, even while the order against her was in effect.

In June of 2016, she showed her close male friend my registry information. He cut all the utility wires to my home and vandalized my car at least four different times. Late at night, he used a microphone and speakers to loudly broadcast information about me directly from the registry to other neighbors. The police issued him a citation for disturbing the peace, but took no further action.

The incidents described above are only some examples of the terribly traumatic experiences my family and I have gone through from 2014 to the present as a result of the events that were triggered directly because of me being listed on the sex offender registry. Now, I live in constant intense fear of further violence, assaults, harassment, threats and discrimination. I am unable to sleep without having nightmares. I have panic attacks on a regular basis. I have struggled with severe depression and fears of leaving my home to go shopping or to the doctor. I live mostly in seclusion and isolation from others, even though I pose no harm to the community.

In many ways, my life has been destroyed because of the unnecessary burdens placed on registrants under the current law. Nothing in HB 5679 would have prevented or changed these outcomes from happening, because HB 5679 continues with the same public notifications.

At the same time, public notifications do little or nothing to keep the public safe. This is because a majority of the listed offenders are low risk to commit another crime and they are not differentiated from those who are high risk. This is confirmed by numerous, current, objective studies on sex offenders and registries. HB 5679 does absolutely nothing to separate out the minority who actually pose a danger to the community based on factors which actually have predictive validity.

Please do not support this terrible bill, as it will only inflict further harm on thousands of citizens like me who, despite having made terrible mistakes in the past, do not currently pose a threat to others in the community.

Thank you for your attention to my testimony on HB 5679.

Very truly yours,

s/Julian M. Gordon

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5/6/2020