

October 15, 2023

Criminal Justice Committee,

My name is Alison Joersz and I've been a freelance court reporter/CER since 2017.

I'm writing to you regarding HB 5046 and the issue of fair pay for court reporters in the State of Michigan. As I'm sure you're aware, court reporters in this state, a female dominated profession, have not had a raise since 1986. Can you imagine if your own salary remained stagnant since 1986? Legislators were only making \$36,520. The minimum wage was \$3.35. Your own salaries have almost doubled since that time. Minimum wage has nearly tripled! Yet court reporter fees, mandated by statute, have not changed at all.

Given that many circuit courts (and others) rely heavily on transcription firms and freelance court reporters such as myself to do the important work of transcribing court proceedings, it's downright shameful that our wages have remained frozen in time for so long. Our work demands professionalism and accuracy. The work that Michigan's appellate courts do, including handing down precedent setting case law, **requires** accurate transcripts. Court processes and decision-making are put on hold while we do our work. And yet, timely production of transcripts has become more and more difficult given the exodus of workers from this field due to the dismally low - *lowest in the nation!* - rate of pay. The work we do is skilled labor and yet we remain sorely undervalued and taken for granted.

In addition to receiving a 1980's-based rate of pay, our status as independent contractors means we receive no benefits: no healthcare, no retirement benefits, no paid time off, etc. As a single mother of two young children, court reporting could never be my primary source of income as I could never make ends meet that way. Instead, I work 3 jobs, frequently dedicating evening and weekends to transcription work, simply to maintain a living wage.

This page rate increase is long overdue. Please help my family and other court reporters like me earn a respectable living that's commensurate with the important work we do.

Respectfully,

Alison Joersz  
1070 Alton Ave  
Flint, MI 48507  
(734)846-7808