



House Elections Committee
December 1, 2016
HBs 6066, 6067, 6068

The Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MCAH) is a nonprofit membership organization formed as an association of emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, nonprofit housing and service programs, government programs and concerned citizens from across the state. Together, we partner with over 600 service providers working directly with individuals experiencing or at imminent risk of experiencing homelessness.

We oppose HB 6066 and express serious concerns about HB 6067-6068. There are many barriers for homeless individuals to exercise their constitutional right to vote in Michigan, and enacting a photo ID and residency requirement such as proposed in HB 6066 would create additional barriers, not just for the 62,447 adults of voting age who were homeless in Michigan in 2015, but for anyone with a low income, disability or other factors that prevent them from easily accessing and maintaining photo IDs.

Currently, homeless individuals are able to register to vote in person without a photo ID and with an address that could include a shelter or even theoretically a street corner. HB 6066 would prevent these individuals who don't have a photo ID from voting on election day. The provisional ballot that would be issued requires proof of residency within 10 days, and we are very concerned that the language of HB 6066 would make it extremely difficult for an individual residing in a shelter, on the street, or moving from location to location to do so.

We are keenly aware that financial barriers exist that prohibit access to certain legal documents that are required to secure a state issued photo ID through the SOS office. Certainly, the ability to waive or minimize those fees would help to facilitate access to photo identification, which then in turn leads to greater access to available services beyond just the right to vote.

Currently, a pilot program is in place through the SOS branch in Oakland County that is similar to those proposed in HBs 6067 and 6068. There are currently no plans for formal state-wide implementation. This experience has raised concerns by the SOS staff as to the potential financial burden associated with that type of an implementation. Analysis of the process outlined by HBs 6067 and 6068 may not completely reflect the staff time and training burden as well as the full count of individuals who would seek this service, both in signing an affidavit in lieu of producing a birth certificate as well as waiving the fees associated with achieving a state ID.

We are unclear as to the implied urgency in proposing this legislation during a lame duck session. We support further research on this matter and welcome the opportunity to participate on this process to ensure that any negative impact is minimized and take into account all populations such as those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. We are pleased to see the provisions for fee waivers, as this is an issue that we are currently seeing as an issue in Michigan and nationally. But to limit this to



access to voting ignores the additional obstacles that we see daily with regards to photo ID and services for many individuals in Michigan.

In summary, like many of our colleagues concerned with populations who are already experiencing the difficulties of voting requirement, we feel that this package of bills would only increase those barriers, and unnecessarily so. This is a time when we should be increasing access to voting to promote a truly democratic process. HB 6066 will disproportionately affect our most vulnerable populations, including not just the homeless, but our low income, minority and veteran populations as well.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.

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