



## MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Esteemed Members of the House:

We are writing to share our support for the recommendations of the Michigan Jails Task Force, as introduced in HB 5846 to HB 5857 and HB 5844. We'd also like to invite you to join us in advocating for them to be heard in committee.

The Michigan Jails Task Force was established by state and county leaders, including Speaker Chatfield, in 2019. They spent nearly a year collecting and analyzing data, listening to expert testimony, and gathering public input before releasing their recommendations in January of this year.

**We believe these Jails Task Force bills reflect our shared priorities and principles, and represent an opportunity for Michigan to address inefficiencies and injustices in a way that is methodical and well-researched, rather than reactionary.**

The bills eliminate most driver's license suspensions for non-dangerous traffic offenses, reclassify some minor traffic misdemeanors as civil infractions, and eliminate many mandatory minimum jail sentences that have not been shown to enhance public safety. At the same time, they maintain accountability for people who break the law, preserve the safety of our communities, expand economic opportunity, and shrink government interference in the daily lives of Michiganders.

The Jails Task Force recommendations provide a framework for right-sizing Michigan's jails in a *safe, efficient, and just* manner. They allow resources to be redirected away from minor, nonviolent offenses and free up our law enforcement agencies to focus on issues that have a greater bearing on public safety. In the process, low-risk individuals will be able to pay their debt to society while avoiding undue negative exposure to jail. As a result, Michiganders who make minor mistakes will be able to maintain their family ties and keep their jobs, so that they continue their economic contribution to our state.

Strong families, safe communities, and the opportunity to provide for yourself and contribute to your community are all conservative principles we hold in high regard. For these reasons, we support the Jails Task Force bills and urge you to do the same.

For those who would like to learn more about the bills, we've attached a one-pager with more information to this letter. Please join us in advocating for HB 5846 to HB 5857 and 5844 to be heard in committee.

Sincerely,

Representative Bronna Kahle, District 57

Representative Luke Meerman, District 88

Representative Steve Johnson, District 72

Representative Beau LaFave, District 108





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### Michigan Jails Task Force – House Legislative Package

#### **Maintain Accountability and Preserve Public Safety**

- This package of bills is designed to align appropriate punishments with low-level violations, maintaining public safety by focusing resources and more serious punishments on dangerous offenses.
- For example, the bills prioritize driver's license suspensions for *serious* driving-related offenses, like operating a vehicle while intoxicated and using a vehicle in commission of a felony, ensuring our roads remain safe.
- The bills do not eliminate accountability – low-level offenses that are decriminalized are still punishable with a fine, and offenses for which the mandatory jail sentence is eliminated can still be punished by a fine, probation, or jail if appropriate, ensuring that actions have consequences.

#### **Expand Economic Opportunity**

- In 2018, Michigan suspended more than 350,000 driver's licenses for issues unrelated to driving safety. In a state where driving is nearly essential to make a living or attend school, suspending licenses for non-dangerous driving offenses makes it harder to find and keep a job and maintain family responsibilities, limiting economic stability.
- Research shows that putting low-risk individuals in jail causes disruptions to life and work and exposes them to negative influences that can increase recidivism down the road. These bills will help prevent that.

#### **Shrink Government Interference**

- Nearly half of cases filed in Michigan district courts each year are for traffic misdemeanors, including driving with a license that was suspended for something besides unsafe driving. Many of these cases do not seriously impact public safety.
- Reclassifying low-level traffic offenses to civil infractions, and preserving license suspensions for unsafe driving, will hold drivers accountable, shrink government intrusion, and maintain resources for serious offenses.

#### *Jails Task Force bills introduced in the House:*

- **HB 5846, Rep. Bronna Kahle** (R, District 57); **HB 5847, Rep. Luke Meerman** (R, District 88); **HB 5848, Rep. Donna Lasinski** (D, District 52); **HB 5849, Rep. Mike Mueller** (R, District 51); **HB 5850, Rep. Rebekah Warren** (D, District 55); **HB 5851, Rep. Tenisha Yancey** (D, District 1); **HB 5852, Rep. Lori Stone** (D, District 28); **HB TBD, Rep. Cynthia Neeley** (D, District 34); and **HCR 29, Rep. Beau LaFave** (R, District 108) eliminate license suspensions for violations of the law unrelated to dangerous driving.
- **HB 5853, Rep. Bronna Kahle** reclassifies many traffic misdemeanors as civil infractions.
- **HB 5854, Rep. Tim Sneller** (D, District 50); **HB 5855, Rep. Tommy Brann** (R, District 77); **HB 5856, Rep. Steven Johnson** (R, District 72); **HB 5857, Rep. Jack O'Malley** (R, District 101); and **HB 5844 Rep. Joe Bellino** (R, District 17) eliminate mandatory minimum jail sentences in the Motor Vehicle Code, School Code, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Railroad Code, and Public Health Code.