

TRIAL COURT FUNDING COMMISSION INTERIM REPORT

July 9, 2019

WHEREAS, the County Clerks in Michigan have a constitutional stake in the trial court funding question, but were excluded from participation in the Trial Court Funding Commission. The County Clerks have a unique relationship with the courts and a perspective that should be heard when making recommendations for substantial changes.

WHEREAS, the goal of Public Act 65 of 2017 was to create a Trial Court Funding Commission to “review and recommend changes to the trial court funding system in light of *People v. Cunningham*”.

WHEREAS, the vast majority of the Interim Report deals with the consolidation of all local court staff and operations under state control but does not solve the funding problems that *Cunningham* created (simply moving collections of fines and costs and payment of court salaries/benefits to the state does not mitigate the fact that we will still not be funded adequately).

WHEREAS, centralized control of our court process does not necessarily serve the best interest of the public. The County Clerks believe that local judges and citizens are better served by local custodial control. It has been proven to be a more responsive method of serving their needs.

WHEREAS, research of other state-funded court systems has shown that state funding creates a culture of complacency that tolerates delay. Accountability is removed from the local level and placed in the hands of bureaucrats in state government who are less connected to the people.

WHEREAS, we are concerned that transferring funding to state control would tether the judicial branch to the short term whims of the legislative and executive branches even more than they exist already. In the event of a lack of state funding (government shutdown) this process would also force the shutdown of the court system, resulting in constitutional violation of due process.

WHEREAS, it is critical to note that the finding of 46th Circuit Trial Court v. County of Crawford, 2006:143 states directly: “In order for the judicial branch to carry out its constitutional responsibilities as envisioned by the Constitution of 1963, art3, SS 2, the judiciary cannot be totally beholden to legislative determinations regarding its budgets.”

WHEREAS, this Interim Report recommends altering the Michigan Constitution to provide that circuit court clerks are employed by the court and under the supervision of state government rather than the County Clerk.

WHEREAS, County Clerks serve a critical role in the judicial system. They are constitutionally mandated to ensure the integrity of the records and protecting the best interests of our citizens. Removing County Clerks from the picture would serve as substantial disruption to the purpose that we serve.


NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Hillsdale County Board of Commissioners are opposed to the Trial Court Funding Commission Interim Report dated April 8, 2019. We believe that it is imperative to maintain local control and accountability because that is how our constituents are best served. We strongly oppose this Interim Report and possible pending legislation and encourage the other 82 Michigan counties to join us.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Senator Mike Shirkey, Representative Eric Leutheuser, the Michigan Association of Counties and the other 82 Michigan Counties.

Respectfully Submitted,



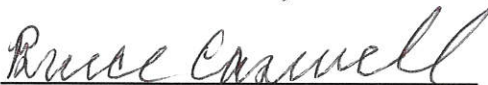
MARK E. WILEY, Chair, District 3
Board of Commissioners



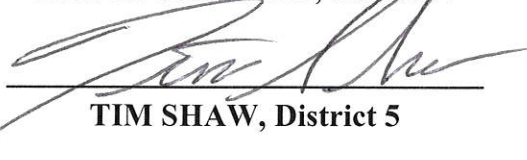
JULIE J. GAMES, Vice-Chair, District 2



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