Dear Governor Whitmer, Senate Majority Leader Shirkey, and House Speaker Wentworth:

As diverse crime victims from across the state of Michigan, we are writing to express our overwhelming support for recently introduced legislation that prioritizes our needs as survivors and improves safety throughout the state – the Safer Michigan Act, HB 4670-76.

Far too often, the voices of crime victims like us – who reflect those most likely to be harmed throughout the state – have not been centered in policy conversations about public safety and the criminal justice system. However, recently, you’ve changed this by taking steps towards ending the cycle of crime and improving the state’s economy.

This is a smart approach to building healthy and safe communities, and The Safer Michigan Act is an opportunity to build on this smart approach by supporting crime victims, prioritizing rehabilitation, and adopting proven policies that will improve public safety. Its reforms are an opportunity to not only tackle the root causes of crime, but also support diverse crime victims, save taxpayer funds and further stimulate the economy during these trying times.

Too many people who have survived violence have the devastating consequences compounded by barriers to accessing support from the state’s victim services. The state’s crime victim compensation program has both the lowest application rate of any state, as well as a higher denial rate (30 percent) than the national average. The program has many barriers in its application process, and even when accessed, does not provide support at an adequate level. To better support crime victims, the Safer Michigan Act addresses these gaps by removing bureaucratic hurdles so crime victims get the urgent help needed, with less red tape, at a sufficient level.
In addition, many crime victims lack protections from losing their housing in the aftermath of their victimization. The Safer Michigan Act would provide lease termination protections to all violent crime victims, witnesses, and their family members to ensure their safety.

As victims of crime, we are determined to never have what happened to us ever happen to anyone else. Communities across Michigan deserve a criminal justice system that provides critical support to crime victims so they will never be victimized again. Michigan currently spends about $2 billion a year on incarceration, while many crime victims lack support. Our state can build on previous successes with programs like Vocational Village, which incentivize incarcerated people to participate in rehabilitative programming. These proven, smart policies require accountability, while ending the cycle of crime and ensuring more prudent use of taxpayer dollars.

The Safer Michigan Act would incentivize participation in rehabilitation programs amongst people in prison before they are released. This approach of providing productivity credits creates a system of accountability where participants can earn credits upon completion of programs, such as Michigan Department of Corrections core programming and education, that prepare people for return into the workforce. These policies have a proven record of making communities safer and stimulating local economies by reducing recidivism and helping people become productive members of their communities upon their reentry.

Common sense solutions, like the Safer Michigan Act, are an opportunity to ensure public funds are invested in what works to stop cycles of crime and provide trauma recovery in communities often left behind by the current system. Our public safety resources must be employed in the best ways that are critical to making our communities safer.

We thank you for listening to crime victims in the past, and look forward to continuing our work together to ensure that all communities are safe. We urge your support of these critical reforms and offer ourselves as a resource to make sure that the voices of diverse crime victims are heard to make our communities safer.

Sincerely,

Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice Michigan members

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Beverly Stevenson
Blake Hart
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Brenda Newell
Bridgetta Bingham
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Catherine Infantado
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Cindy Davis
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