GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS
DETROIT

JOHN E. JOHNSON, JR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

March 13, 2026

Jack Rucker
428 West Lenawee
Lansing, MI 48933

RE: MDCR Case#: 662279
Lonnie Smith v City of East Lansing/East Lansing Police Department

Dear Jack Rucker:

You identified yourself as the legal representative for Claimant, Lonnie Smith. Claimant's rebuttal is needed to the following information provided by City of East Lansing/East Lansing Police Department (ELPD):

Respondent's position statement was provided by Attorney, Timothy Ferrand. Attorney Ferrand also provided supporting documentation, including the police report of the August 24, 2025, incident; bodycam and surveillance video footage; Respondent's Code of Ordinances and policies; the September 26, 2025, news release; and Claimant's citation and booking.

Respondent stated that it is contrary to public policy, by Ordinance, for any person to deny any other person the enjoyment of their civil rights or for any person to discriminate against any other person in the exercise of their civil rights or to harass any person because of their protected class. The City has created a Human Relations Commission to implement the City's civil rights ordinance. A complaint process has also been established by which any person claiming to be aggrieved by a violation of civil rights may file a complaint with Human Relations. The East Lansing Police Department (ELPD) also maintains policies prohibiting bias influenced policing, and all employees are trained regarding biased based policing and diversity, equity, and inclusion measures upon initial hire. Training is conducted annually, thereafter.

Respondent denied Claimant's allegation of abuse and arrest due to his race. The incident involving Claimant occurred during Michigan State University's Welcome Weekend. On August 24, 2025, at 1:37 a.m., ELPD Officers Jacey Kingsbury, Logan Wainman, and Andrew Lyon were working as part of the uniformed foot patrol in the downtown area. At 1:38 A.M., the officers became aware of a loud argument occurring between individuals standing in line outside of a Dave’s Hot Chicken. A private security officer working at the front door of the restaurant alerted them to a group of individuals engaged in a physical altercation at the door. The officers were not aware of Claimant’s race or skin color at the time. As the officers approached, they observed Claimant, who was wearing a white t-shirt, physically restraining another man wearing all black. The other man was later identified as Mason Woods. Claimant was shoving Mr. Woods back while arguing with him face-to-face. A second man was grabbing Mr. Woods from behind.

Approaching the altercation, the officers verbally identified themselves as police and gave

multiple loud verbal directions to "get back" and "stop," before attempting to physically separate Claimant and Mr. Woods. Claimant, Mr. Woods, and the third man ignored the verbal commands. Officer Lyon observed the physical altercation, heard the verbal directives of the other officers, and observed that the three individuals continued to fight. Officer Lyon then reached in and deployed two bursts of Department-issued pepper spray. One burst was directed toward Claimant while the other was directed toward Mr. Woods. Officer Lyon deployed the pepper spray solely for the purpose of terminating the altercation, and it immediately had the desired effect. Claimant released Mr. Woods, and the fighting ceased. Respondent reported that at the time the pepper spray was deployed, the race of the individuals were unknown and irrelevant. Respondent emphasized that the events evolved rapidly and that there was no indication that the officers had any reason to contemplate the race of the individuals and/or to target anyone based on race.

Respondent confirmed that Claimant was arrested and cited for misdemeanor Disorderly Fight in violation of local ordinance § 26-52(9), which states, "No person shall…disturb the public peace and quiet by engaging in any fight or brawl in any public place." Claimant was then transported to the ELPD. Once inside the department building, Claimant was provided with Sudecon wet wipes to clean the pepper spray from his eyes, and he was instructed on how to properly use the wipes. Officer Lyon discussed the reason for the arrest with Claimant and listened to Claimant's explanation of events. Respondent stated that the discussion was professional, cordial, and appropriate. Claimant's race was never interjected into the conversation. Respondent asserted that Officer Lyon's body cam video shows that Claimant was not treated differently or improperly because of his race.

Respondent also denied Claimant's allegation of other terms and conditions due to his race. Respondent stated Claimant was not denied any police service or accommodation because of his race or treated differently than any other person suspected of disorderly conduct. Claimant did not request and was not denied medical attention while in custody. He was released from custody around half an hour after his arrest. Respondent was not aware of any medical attention Claimant sought after his release.

On September 26, 2025, Respondent's Communications Department issued a news release regarding the arrest of Claimant and Mr. Woods. The news release reflected Respondent's commitment to transparency and accountability. The description of the incident, including the arrests and charges, were consistent with the body camera footage and the reports of the officers involved. Respondent emphasized that this was not the only news release made to keep the public informed regarding officer use of force that night; this incident was one of 52 service calls that the ELPD responded to that night. Ten individuals were arrested in various, unrelated incidents. Respondent stated there was no evidence that the decision to make the release was in any way motivated by Claimant's race.

Please contact me with Claimant's response to Respondent's answer as well as any documentation or other information you believe supports his complaint.

If I do not receive the rebuttal information by March 23, 2026, the complaint may be dismissed.

Sincerely,

Kaylee Lee
Civil Rights Investigator
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