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MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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STATE AND LOCAL PUBLIC
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PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SECURITY

September 25, 2026

East Lansing City Council
410 Abbot Rd
East Lansing, MI 48823

Honorable Members of the East Lansing City Council:

We are writing today with concerns regarding recent changes to the scope of East Lansing's Human Rights Commission (HRC), including the removal of the HRC's investigative abilities. The purpose of this letter is to strongly encourage the City Council to reconsider the changes made to the HRC. It is our sincere hope that the Council will work closely with the HRC to develop a policy that allows the Commission to resume investigative duties whilst acknowledging the HRC does not have judicial decision-making power.

We have heard from a number of constituents who are concerned with the limits that have been placed on the HRC and its investigatory abilities. These concerns are increasingly relevant, in light of the recent report presented to the East Lansing Independent Police Oversight Commission (ELIPOC), alleging that in 2025, Black subjects were 173% more likely than White subjects to have more severe force used against them and other non-White subjects were 265% more likely than White subjects to have severe force used against them by the ELPD.

The HRC is a powerful tool that ensures the civil rights of all members of our community are not just protected but prioritized in East Lansing. Both the HRC and the Council are most effective when working together as partners to keep our community inclusive and welcoming to all.

Our community members are still healing from tragedies including the horrific mass shooting on campus in 2023. It's absolutely crucial that we work to foster an environment where every East Lansing resident feels safe, secure and heard. In addition, we must continue to recognize and restore justice to populations that have been historically and systemically marginalized against, including Black and Brown residents.

Restoring the investigative abilities of the HRC and working closely with both the HRC and ELIPOC while making decisions, particularly regarding public safety, would be a simple but significant step in helping our community heal and restoring trust between residents and their government.

East Lansing is a diverse community. In particular, our community is comprised of a unique mix of permanent homeowners and students. Whether they stay here only for the school semesters or choose to remain in East Lansing beyond graduation, every student belongs here and deserves to feel seen and heard by their government.

Students contribute greatly to the economic health of the region and are essential to the special character that makes East Lansing a wonderful place to live, work and visit. One of the benefits of the HRC is that it specifically addresses discrimination based on student status and helps ensure trust and accountability between students and their government.

We do not wish to prescribe exactly what powers should be restored to the HRC. We believe that the most productive and effective next step is for the City Council and HRC to work together to develop a new policy that is legally enforceable but demonstrates to everyone that East Lansing is committed to inclusion and safety for all.

Thank you for your attention to this incredibly important matter and for your tireless work on behalf of East Lansing. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Penelope Tsernoglou
State Representative
75th House District



Julie Brixie
State Representative
73rd House District