



WASHTENAW COUNTY

OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

ELI SAVIT
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

VICTORIA BURTON-HARRIS
CHIEF ASSISTANT PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

May 6, 2026

Dear Esteemed Committee Member,

I am happy to submit this letter of support for our Restorative Justice Program partner, the Dispute Resolution Center of Washtenaw and Livingston Counties (DRC).

As a prosecutor's office dedicated to criminal legal reform and less punitive approaches to crime and harm, we have been working with the DRC since 2021 deflecting misdemeanor and felony cases to the Restorative Justice program. One of the Prosecutor's Office goals is to address inequities in our community by diverting people out of the criminal legal system, decrease incarceration rates in our community, and keep families together whenever possible.

We know that Black and brown communities are affected at much higher levels of charges, sentences, and incarceration rates than for white people. Through a community researched report by the Citizens for Racial Equity in Washtenaw: *Racial Disparities in the Washtenaw County Criminal Legal System* published in June 2020, it was discovered that "...the differences were not small and ranged from 22% to 1,150% more People of Color charged than whites or that a Person of Color is anywhere from 3 to 29 times as likely to be charged...than a white person." My office is working toward more equitable outcomes for communities of color, which the Restorative Justice Program is a part of.

We also know that deflection and diversion programs throughout the country demonstrate far better outcomes for individuals and our communities at large. In many communities, the restorative justice approach has proven to reduce recidivism rates by as much as 80%-90% in many communities. As a friend of the DRC, I have known them to be a leader of Restorative Justice in Washtenaw County for the past 20 years and have absolute confidence and trust in their expertise and view their partnership crucial to building a more equitable and just community.

We have a long-term vision to create transformative change and hope that you will support the growth and expansion of this critical program in Washtenaw County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eli Savit".

Eli Savit
Prosecuting Attorney, Washtenaw County
734-222-6620
savite@washtenaw.org

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Justice, Justice, Shall You Pursue

Teferi Brent
Senior Director
Mayor's Office of Neighborhood and Community Safety
City of Detroit, Mayor's Office

May 6, 2026

State Bar Association Foundation
306 Townsend Street
Lansing, MI 48933

Subject: Letter of Support for the Wayne County Dispute Resolution Center

Dear Selection Committee:

I am happy to submit this letter of support for our Restorative Justice Program partner, the Wayne County Dispute Resolution Center (WCDRC).

As part of Mayor Sheffield's new Office and Community Safety department, we are dedicated to criminal legal reform and less punitive approaches to crime and harm. We have been working with WCDRC to help deflect misdemeanor and family domestic violence. We are working toward non-police responses toward these situations. One of the Mayor's Office goals is to address inequities in our community by diverting people out of the criminal legal system, decrease incarceration rates in our community, and keep families together whenever possible.

We know that deflection and diversion programs throughout the country demonstrate far better outcomes for individuals and our communities at large. The restorative justice approach compared to our current system, has proven to drastically reduce recidivism rates by as much as 80%-90% in many communities. As a friend of WCDRC, I have known them to be a leader of Restorative Justice in Wayne County for the past 7 years and have absolute confidence and trust in their expertise and their partnership is crucial to building a more equitable and just community.

We have a long-term vision to create transformative change and hope that you will support the growth and expansion of this critical program in Wayne County.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

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Teferi Brent
Senior Director
Mayor's Office of Neighborhood and Community Safety
City of Detroit, Mayor's Office



May 5, 2026

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing in support of the Michigan State Bar Foundation Administration of Justice Grant to fund Community Dispute Resolution Programs and Restorative Justice Deflection and Diversion Programs with legal system partners throughout Michigan.

The Dispute Resolution Center of Washtenaw & Livingston Counties, the Wayne County Dispute Resolution Center, and the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan are requesting \$75,000 for a one-year grant period to develop three interconnected initiatives: a strengthened volunteer management program, a cross-center comparative data evaluation, and a coordinated outreach campaign to build capacity for our Restorative Justice Programs. We envision this as the first year of a two-year effort, one that will establish the foundation for measurable, lasting growth across all three programs.

At the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan, we have partnered closely with the Kent County Prosecutor's Office on diversion cases for adults and youth using restorative justice approaches, working on a wide variety of cases including assault, assault and battery, malicious destruction of property, and automobile accidents. Since 2018, results have been strong with compliance rates of 95%, and 91% of participants have not reoffended.

As restorative justice deflection and diversion programs continue to grow across Michigan, they still face real headwinds. Despite the transformational impact we witness every day, these programs are frequently dismissed as "soft on crime" or seen as failing to hold people accountable — perceptions that persist in both the legal community and the broader public. A coordinated, cross-center outreach campaign for south Michigan would raise visibility, deepen understanding, and build the support these programs need to thrive.

Across the state, CDRP Centers are experiencing declining volunteer recruitment and retention. As caseloads increasingly involve more complex situations — serious harm, trauma, and high-stakes legal matters — volunteers require more advanced, trauma-informed training and stronger ongoing support. Investing in a more robust volunteer management infrastructure would improve service quality and reduce the strain on staff, who currently must step in to facilitate cases when volunteers are unavailable.

An independent cross-center data evaluation is equally essential to demonstrating program impact. A comparative analysis with a final report would provide credible evidence of effectiveness, strengthen future funding applications, and make a



compelling case for expanding restorative justice approaches throughout Michigan's legal system.

Beyond the legal system, growing community awareness and understanding of restorative justice is critical to the long-term success of these programs. When community members — including those who may one day participate as victims, responsible parties, or supporters — understand what restorative justice is and how it works, they are more likely to engage meaningfully in the process and to advocate for its expansion. Building broader knowledge and buy-in at the community level strengthens referral pathways, supports volunteer recruitment, and creates an environment where restorative approaches are seen as a valued — and expected — part of how our communities respond to harm.

Our communities stand to gain enormously from the growth of restorative justice. We hope you will invest in that future.

With gratitude,

Signed by:

Benjamin Walsh

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Benjamin Walsh
President

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

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Grand Rapids, MI 49503-3022
Telephone: (616) 632-6710
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CHRISTOPHER BECKER
Prosecutor

ELIZABETH A. BARTLETT
Chief Assistant Prosecutor

To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleased to submit this letter of support for our partner, the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan (DRCWM). We have been working with the DRCWM since 2017 when we came together to create the *Restorative Justice Conference Program for Juvenile Criminal Behavior*. I hoped to create a program where juvenile cases could be diverted from the "normal" juvenile justice system, yet they would also be held accountable and provide an avenue for victims to be a part of that process. DRCWM was extremely happy to help work with my office and the juvenile court system to help develop such a program. I am tremendously pleased with the work my office and the DRCWM has done over the years in this area.

This program is particularly meaningful for juvenile cases. Early diversion from the juvenile justice system is one of the most effective tools we have for changing a young person's trajectory and ideally keeping them out of the adult system. Restorative justice gives young people the chance to take accountability and move forward — without the long-term consequences of a formal record. I am pleased to say that ninety-one percent of participants in our RJ program have not reoffended. The Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan has been a trusted partner since 2017, and we have full confidence in their expertise and their ability to continue to deliver results.

Given the success of this program, I made the decision to expand our partnership into moving violation causing death and/or serious injury cases; these are accidents where serious bodily injury or death have occurred due to simple negligence in the adult system. These are extremely difficult cases when a loved one has died, or suffered horrible injuries, and the other party never intended for something to happen. A person simply running a stop sign and causing an accident is an example of the type of case that may be referred. DRCWM has had success in cases where the parties agree to the program, in bringing those two sides together to promote healing. Conversations between responsible parties and those who survived or lost loved ones have helped participants process grief and trauma and find a path forward that a court outcome alone cannot always provide.

Restorative justice programming is a wonderful option for a number of cases that move through this office — especially ones involving our youth — that help keep individuals out of the criminal justice system and in their communities. We hope you will support the continued growth of this program in Kent County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Becker", is written over a horizontal line.

Chris Becker
Kent County Prosecuting Attorney

John S. Ange
Assistant Prosecuting Attorney
Principal Attorney Juvenile Unit
Lincoln Hall of Justice
1025 Forest Avenue
Detroit, MI 48207

May 6, 2026

State Bar Association Foundation
306 Townsend Street
Lansing, MI 48933

Subject: Letter of Support for the Wayne County Dispute Resolution Center

Dear Selection Committee:

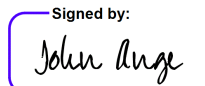
I am happy to submit this letter of support for our Restorative Justice Program partner, the Wayne County Dispute Resolution Center (WCDRC).

As a progressive Prosecutor dedicated to criminal legal reform and less punitive approaches to crime and harm, we have been working with WCDRC since 2020 deflecting misdemeanor and family domestic violence to Talk It Out (our Restorative Justice program). One of the Prosecutor's Office goals is to address inequities in our community by diverting people out of the criminal legal system, decrease incarceration rates in our community, and keep families together whenever possible.

We know that deflection and diversion programs throughout the country demonstrate far better outcomes for individuals and our communities at large. The restorative justice approach compared to our current system, has proven to drastically reduce recidivism rates by as much as 80%-90% in many communities. As a friend of WCDRC, I have known them to be a leader of Restorative Justice in Wayne County for the past 7 years and have absolute confidence and trust in their expertise and their partnership is crucial to building a more equitable and just community.

We have a long-term vision to create transformative change and hope that you will support the growth and expansion of this critical program in Wayne County.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

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John S. Ange
Assistant Prosecuting Attorney
Principal Attorney Juvenile Unit