

Supreme Court Clerk
Michigan Supreme Court
P.O. Box 30052
Lansing MI 48909

Re: Proposed Amendment to MCL 8.115 (ADM file No. 2018-30)

Dear Clerk:

I submit this comment in full alignment with the position executed and submitted by the Berrien County Trial Court, strongly opposed to the proposed amendments to MCL 8.115. I incorporate by reference all examples provided.

I submit this individual letter compelled to share my perspective as a member of the Access to Justice Policy Committee of the State Bar of Michigan and as a participant on the Supreme Court Justice for All Taskforce.

I believe this background information is relevant and serves in adding context to the framework of my following comments. My commitment to access to justice issues spans more than 30 years. My legal career began with my early years at Berrien County Legal Services.

The proposed amendment and discussion around MCR 8.115 represents the issue as a primary access to justice issue when it is not. The access to justice concerns raised requires innovative focus on court technology compatible to meet increased demands presented by use of phones and other electronic devices for the storage of files and information relevant to court proceedings. The successful transformation of this information to be associated with court files is the goal. This issue has gained significant focus in our court. Perhaps we are driven to resolution recognizing the paramount need to ensure security for all courthouse staff and public within this building.

Our court security was breached July 11, 2016 in a hostage situation resulting in loss of life. The commitment and appreciation of the obligation to provide the highest degree of safety to staff and the public cannot be overemphasized.

In preparation for my ATJ Policy committee meeting I reviewed several comments that had been submitted. I noted that the majority of those in support of the proposed amendments were focused on issues of convenience. Safety and convenience will never balance. Safety must always carry the greater weight. Inconvenience should not be identified as a barrier to access to justice, when it in truth it is an identified gap.

Thank you for your consideration of my thoughts.

Mabel Johnson Mayfield,
Berrien County Trial Court