



March 29, 2018

Chairperson Hon. Phil Pavlov

Hon. Margaret O'Brien

Education Committee

Education Committee

25<sup>th</sup> State Senate District

20<sup>th</sup> Senate District

201 Townsend Street  
Suite #6200  
Lansing, MI 48933

201 Townsend  
Suite #5400  
Lansing, MI 48933

Re: SB 620 "Yes Means Yes" legislation

Dear Chairperson Pavlov and Senator O'Brien:

We write you in our respective capacities as President of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan and Director of District 7 (Michigan, Ohio, and West Virginia) of the National Association of Women Judges. We have the permission and support of our membership to speak to you as one voice on their behalf.

It does not escape us that nearly on a daily basis we read news reports of sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, and sexual assault of our youth. The state and federal convictions of former MSU doctor Larry Nassar, the current investigations and lawsuits related to Michigan State University, and the most recent charging of a dean of a medical school are but a few of the matters that come directly to mind. We are exceptionally aware of the male and female voices behind the #MeToo movement, which has played out internationally. And, as it pertains to our own profession, it is inescapable to us that despite efforts related to diversity, inclusion, and gender equity, little to no progress has been made by the legal profession on this front over recent years. For data on this topic, we refer you to any of the ABA reports at [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/women/resources/articles\\_reports\\_research\\_topic.html](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/women/resources/articles_reports_research_topic.html)

We are aware that SB 620, the bi-partisan "Yes means Yes" legislation was referred to the Education Committee in October 2017. While this legislation has strong bi-partisan support, it has yet to receive a committee hearing. We write to you today asking that the Education Committee give SB 620 a hearing, so that it can continue in the legislative process. This legislation explicitly sets forth a commitment to all Michigan youth that we will do a better job of protecting them from sexual assault and dating violence. It unequivocally affirms that our society and cultural norms condemn acts of dating and/or sexual violence, and that we as a society will help, not silence, victims of sexual assault and dating violence. This message is so necessary at this moment in time.

Thank you very much for your consideration of our request. Simply, please allow SB 620 to have a hearing so that our youth know without question where we stand on the issues of sexual assault and dating violence.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Julie Gafkay in black ink, including a small monogram 'JMG' at the end.

Julie Gafkay

President

Women Lawyers Association of MI

Handwritten signature of Michelle M. Rick in black ink.

Michelle M. Rick

District 7 Director

National Association of Women Judges

C: Senator Curtis Hertel