

Governor Gretchen Whitmer
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer:

We, the voluntary bar associations and representatives of the legal profession, respectfully request that you add legal services to the list of essential business allowed to remain open during this time.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency has listed "workers supporting the operations of the judicial system, including judges, lawyers, and others providing legal assistance" as essential critical infrastructure workers.

Unfortunately, Michigan is the only state in the nation that has NOT deemed lawyers "essential workers."

We understand these are unprecedented times and that we must do everything we can to protect the health of our citizens. We agree with you that remote working should and will be the recommended choice. However, if realtors, insurance agents and financial advisors are considered necessary to sustain or protect life, or to support those businesses and operations that are necessary to sustain or protect life, we would make the case that lawyers are also essential critical infrastructure workers.

The practice of law has not stopped during this pandemic, nor have the legal rights of Michigan citizens guaranteed by the United States and Michigan constitutions. Many families are in dire need of lawyers to help them with wills and trust, medical and durable power of attorney, employment, and bankruptcy. Injured people, domestic violence victims, and prisoners still need representation. Lawyers must be allowed to work so that their legal rights can be upheld and protected.

Michiganders must have access to the legal services they need—when they need them most, in this time of crisis. Allowing lawyers to re-open offices responsibly to access files, engage their support staff, and meet with those who don't have the means to meet remotely would put Michigan lawyers on par with lawyers in every other state, and more importantly, would put the rights of Michiganders on par with the rights of citizens in other states.

As Rennard Strickland and Frank T. Read write in *The Lawyer Myth: A Defense of the American Legal Profession*, "Lawyers are the foot soldiers of our Constitution." We would follow the strict social distancing and safety guidelines as directed by you.

Along with the State Bar of Michigan and other stakeholders, we have developed a set of comprehensive recommendations to re-open law offices. We have included them with this letter for your consideration as you consider our request.

Thank you for all you have done to keep Michiganders safe. We look forward to continuing to be your partner.

Sincerely,

Criminal Defense
Association of Michigan

Detroit Bar Association

Grand Rapids
Bar Association

Grand Traverse Leelanau
Antrim Bar Association

Michigan Association
for Justice

Saginaw County Bar
Association

Oakland County Bar
Association

Washtenaw County Bar
Association