



1411 K Street N.W.
Suite 900
Washington, D.C. 20005
202-525-5717

Free Markets. Real Solutions.
www.rstreet.org

Testimony from:

Jillian E. Snider, Resident Senior Fellow of Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties, R Street Institute

Testimony in Support of MI SB 613, “Violent Crime Clearance Act.”

December 3, 2025

Senate Civil Rights, Judiciary, and Public Safety Committee

Chairwoman Chang and members of the committee,

My name is Jillian E. Snider, and I am a resident senior fellow of criminal justice and civil liberties at the R Street Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, public policy research organization. Our mission is to engage in policy research and outreach to promote free markets and limited, effective government in many areas, including the criminal justice system. That is why today’s hearing is of special interest to us.

In addition to my current role, I am also a Lecturer at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a retired police officer from the New York City Police Department. My career in law enforcement, including years investigating serious violent crimes, taught me a hard lesson – solving cases is not simply about effort—it depends on adequate resources, modern tools, and systematic investigative practices. That street-level experience, combined with my subsequent research on national clearance rate trends and solutions, informs my testimony today. I have seen what works. I have also seen what fails. Given R Street’s commitment to pragmatic policies that promote justice, accountability, and community safety, we have a strong interest in Senate Bill 613, the Violent Crime Clearance Act.

Clearance rates across Michigan illustrate the urgency. Recent statewide data shows that violent crimes are being cleared at just 42 percent—well below expectations for a state of Michigan’s size and public safety needs.ⁱ For property crimes, the rate is only 12.8 percent.ⁱⁱ Some agencies within the state have seen declines of roughly 20 percentage points over the past decade.ⁱⁱⁱ These numbers reflect more than statistical movement; they represent victims without answers, offenders without accountability, and communities left uncertain about whether justice is attainable.

The national picture underscores the broader trend. For decades, clearance rates in the United States have steadily fallen. In the mid-1960s, homicide clearance exceeded 90 percent; by 2023, that figure had dropped to just over 50 percent.^{iv} Other violent offenses—robbery, rape, aggravated assault—remain below 40 percent.^v Despite differences between states, the underlying drivers are similar: staffing

shortages, evidence backlogs, inconsistent investigative standards, and weakened community cooperation.^{vi} Michigan is not alone in facing these challenges, but the state's solvability gap demonstrates the need for targeted intervention.

Clearance rates matter because they speak directly to whether law enforcement fulfills its core mission: identifying offenders and supporting victims through a credible, effective justice process. When cases remain unsolved, victims and witnesses lose faith that their cooperation will make a difference. Communities begin to believe that consequences are optional, which emboldens repeat offenders and contributes to further cycles of victimization. Public trust erodes, and confidence in government institutions declines.

Criminological research shows that the certainty of justice—far more than the severity of punishment—drives deterrence.^{vii} When offenders perceive a meaningful likelihood of being identified and prosecuted, criminal behavior decreases.^{viii} Conversely, when clearance rates drop, the perceived risk of accountability collapses. This dynamic is especially profound in communities that experience higher concentrations of violence and long-standing mistrust in the justice system.

Michigan's clearance challenges stem from multiple converging operational barriers. Staffing shortages are chief among them. More than 70 percent of all law enforcement agencies in the state are showing some sort of deficit on recruitment and retention of law enforcement professionals.^{ix} Insufficient numbers of investigators, forensic specialists, and analysts force agencies to triage cases and limit follow-up. Statewide recruitment and retention challenges reflect national patterns documented in recent research and agency reporting.^x Excessive caseloads reduce investigative time per case, suppress victim engagement, and diminish opportunities to secure early leads—factors repeatedly shown to influence solvability.^{xi} Forensic delays compound these challenges, leading to stalled cases, fading witness memories, and missed opportunities for timely arrests.^{xii} Fragmented record management and limited real-time data sharing further undermine investigative coordination. Research shows that when agencies operate with incompatible systems or rely on manual information exchange, suspect connections are missed, and multi-agency investigations lose momentum.^{xiii} These issues are not unique to Michigan, but they reflect the structural challenges that SB 613 is designed to address.

SB 613 responds directly to these barriers by creating a statewide violent crime clearance grant program, authorizing support for staffing, forensic capacity, technology modernization, data reporting, and victim/witness assistance—all core elements supported by empirical research and practical experience. The bill's grant structure ensures that agencies of different sizes and capacities, including rural communities, have equitable access to resources.^{xiv}

The personnel provision is one of the most consequential components. Agencies may hire or retain investigators, forensic technicians, and crime analysts—roles shown to improve clearance rates when embedded within investigative teams.^{xv} Research from multiple jurisdictions has demonstrated that experienced investigators paired with analytical support generate more leads, identify patterns earlier, and sustain momentum during lengthy investigations.^{xvi} Training opportunities included in SB 613 help ensure smaller agencies can utilize standardized investigative practices rather than relying solely on informal or inconsistent approaches.

Forensic improvements funded by SB 613 also align with established best practices. Modern evidence-processing equipment, timely lab support, and digital forensic tools reduce backlogs and accelerate investigative steps. Although backlogs vary across states, national research consistently shows that time delays in evidence processing correlate with drops in solvability, weaker victim cooperation, and diminished prosecutorial success.^{xvii}

Technology and records upgrades authorized under the bill address coordination failures that routinely hinder investigations. Standardized systems support cross-agency collaboration, real-time data access, and compliance with reporting requirements. These modern systems are critical for recognizing linkages across cases, identifying repeat offenders, and coordinating efforts across county or municipal lines.^{xviii}

SB 613's emphasis on victim and witness support reflects another proven area of impact. Dedicated personnel and services help build trust with victims and communities who depend on clear communication and follow-through. Evidence from Michigan's existing programs shows increases in engagement and improved clarity for victims navigating the justice system.^{xix} Research also shows that structured outreach supports solvability by sustaining cooperation through lengthy investigative and prosecutorial phases.^{xx}

The bill's accountability provisions are particularly important. The annual reporting requirements—broken down by offense type, personnel investments, forensic improvements, and technology upgrades—create a transparent mechanism to evaluate progress over time.^{xxi} This structure allows lawmakers and stakeholders to examine outcomes, identify effective practices, and ensure that funding is tied to demonstrated improvements. The biennial requirement for the Department of State Police to identify and disseminate successful practices reinforces statewide learning and ensures that agencies benefit from innovations developed through the grant program.

Across Michigan, communities deserve a public safety system that responds effectively to violent crime and provides justice for victims. The current clearance rate leaves too many families without answers and too many offenders without accountability. SB 613 represents a targeted, evidence-supported strategy to reverse this trend by building investigative capacity, modernizing systems, and strengthening community trust.

Michigan does not need to accept 42 percent clearance rates. Research, practice, and experience all point toward a clear reality: When agencies have access to adequate staffing, strong forensic support, upgraded technology, and dedicated victim services, clearance rates rise, trust grows, and communities become safer. SB 613 offers Michigan law enforcement the tools necessary to achieve these outcomes.

I urge the committee to pass this important legislation and take a meaningful step towards improved case clearance rates and justice for victims of crime in Michigan.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jillian E. Snider

Resident Senior Fellow, Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties

ⁱ Michigan State Police. Crime Dashboard. Last accessed October 19, 2025.

<https://www.michigan.gov/msp/divisions/cjic/dashboard-portal/crime-dashboard>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Emma Spring, "AAPD sees steady decline in crime clearance rates over last decade," *The Michigan Daily*, March 12, 2025. <https://www.michigandaily.com/news/public-safety/aapd-sees-steady-decline-in-crime-clearance-rates-over-last-decade/>.

^{iv} Philip J. Cook and Ashley Mancik, "The Sixty-Year Trajectory of Homicide Clearance Rates: Toward a Better Understanding of the Great Decline," *Annual Review of Criminology* 7 (January 2024), pp. 59–83. <https://www.annualreviews.org/content/journals/10.1146/annurev-criminol-022422-122744>.

^v Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Incidents Cleared by Offense Category, 2023," Crime Data Explorer, last accessed April 24, 2025. <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp>.

^{vi} Jillian Snider, "Solving Crime, Protecting Communities: A Blueprint for Safer Streets," *R Street Policy Study* No. 327, June 2025. <https://www.rstreet.org/research/solving-crime-protecting-communities-a-blueprint-for-safer-streets/>.

^{vii} Daniel S. Nagin, "Deterrence in the Twenty-First Century," in *Crime and Justice in America: 1975–2025* (University of Chicago Press, 2013). <https://doi.org/10.1086/670398>; April Pattavina et al., "Revisiting the effectiveness of HOPE/swift-certain-fair supervision programs: A meta-analytic review," *Criminology & Public Policy* 23:1 (February 2024), pp. 45–76. <https://globccr.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Criminology-Public-Policy-2023-Pattavina-Revisiting-the-effectiveness-of-HOPE-swift%E2%80%90certain%E2%80%90fair-supervision-3.pdf>

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Jillian Snider, "Closing the Case: Michigan's Push to Solve Violent Crime," R Street Institute, October 20, 2025. <https://www.rstreet.org/commentary/closing-the-case-michigans-push-to-solve-violent-crime/>.

^x Ibid.

^{xi} Richard R. Johnson, "Improving Case Clearance Rates in Criminal Investigations," Dolan Consulting Group, April 2018. https://www.dolanconsultinggroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Research-Brief_Clearance-Rates1.pdf.

^{xii} Snider. <https://www.rstreet.org/research/solving-crime-protecting-communities-a-blueprint-for-safer-streets/>.

^{xiii} Cynthia Lum et al., "Differences Between High and Low Performing Police Agencies in Clearing Robberies, Aggravated Assaults, and Burglaries: Findings From an Eight-Agency Case Study," *Police Quarterly* 27:2 (2024), pp. 135–157. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10986111231182728>.

^{xiv} 2025 Michigan SB 613. <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Bills/Bill?ObjectName=2025-SB-0613>.

^{xv} Lum et al. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10986111231182728>.

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xvii} John M. Collins, "A Reality Check on Crime Lab Backlogs," *Michigan Bar Journal* (October 2012), pp. 37–38.

<https://criticalvictories.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2012-1001-Reality-Check-on-Crime-Lab-Backlogs.pdf>;

Jennifer Leros, "Beyond the Evidence: Leveraging Decision Intelligence to Drive Better Outcomes in Digital Forensics," Cognyte, May 2, 2024. <https://www.cognyte.com/blog/digital-forensics>.

^{xviii} Snider. <https://www.rstreet.org/research/solving-crime-protecting-communities-a-blueprint-for-safer-streets/>.

^{xix} Cathie Crew, "Mecosta Osceola Victim Services Unit goes live," *Big Rapid News*, May 10, 2022.

<https://www.bigrapidsnews.com/news/article/Mecosta-Osceola-Victim-Services-Unit-goes-live-17159247.php>; Adriana

Doria, "GRPD's Victim Services Unit 'helps people navigate the system,'" *WoodTV*, April 4, 2025.

<https://www.woodtv.com/news/grand-rapids/grpds-victim-services-unit-helps-people-navigate-the-system>.

^{xx} Lum et al. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10986111231182728>; Emily Wright and Bree Boppre, "Enhancing and Professionalizing the Victim Services Field Should Be a National Priority," Urban Institute, March 2024. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/Enhancing_and_Professionalizing_the_Victim_Services_Field_Should_Be_a_National_Priority.pdf.

^{xxi} Neil Gross, "The Myths Holding Back Police Reform," *Time*, Sept. 26, 2023. <https://time.com/6316258/myths-police-reform>.