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Michigan Civil Rights Commission Adopts Resolution Opposing Michigan Civil Rights Initiative

Michigan Department of Civil Rights

For Immediate Release: January 11, 2004

Lansing, MI - The Michigan Civil Rights Commission (MCRC) adopted a resolution reaffirming the cross-cultural social benefits of affirmative action style programs and communicating its opposition to any attempts to undermine the equal opportunity protections currently set forth in the Michigan Constitution. (See below for the MCRC resolution.)

“Michigan has a legal and moral imperative to provide equal opportunity to people of all races and cultural backgrounds,” said Linda V. Parker, Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR). “Affirmative action has proven its value in facilitating diversity by helping to eliminate the barriers that continue to exist for women and people of color. The Commission took a necessary stance against the ballot initiative and its dire consequences.”

Commissioner Mark Bernstein added, “The Michigan Civil Rights Initiative is a shameful attempt to confuse and manipulate unsuspecting Michigan voters. Ward Connelly’s initiative is to

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civil rights what an ax is to a tree. Don't let these extremists tear down our state's great tradition of enabling and protecting diversity."

The Commission's resolution became immediately necessary because of growing confusion regarding the relationship between the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative. Both members of the Commission and the Department's offices have received calls by individuals assuming the two are related. The resolution was issued in part to clarify that the MCRC and MDCR are in no way affiliated with the ballot initiative titled the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, or its sponsoring organization the Michigan Civil Rights Coalition.

The Commission has also formed a subcommittee to address and identify further actions with regard to its opposition to the initiative.

Resolution on the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative:

Whereas, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission was created by the Michigan Constitution of 1963 to carry out the guarantees against discrimination articulated in Article I, Section 2; and

Whereas, Article I, Section 2 of the Michigan Constitution provides that no person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws, nor be discriminated against because of religion, race, color or national origin; and

Whereas, as further stated in Article V, Section 29, the Michigan Constitution directs the Commission to investigate alleged discrimination against any person because of religion, race, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, height, weight, arrest record and physical and mental disabilities; and

Whereas, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission recognizes the valuable contributions made to society by women and men of various cultures and ethnic groups and persons with disabilities; and

Whereas, affirmative action has proven its value as an effective tool in the removal of barriers for women and men of various ethnic cultural groups



who have been denied equal access to participation in education, employment, housing, and contracts on an equal basis; and

Whereas, the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative is not an initiative that is sponsored or advocated and is, in fact, opposed by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission; and

Whereas, the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative represents an attempt to mislead Michigan voters regarding the issue of discrimination by state entities; and

Whereas, the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative is inconsistent with the Constitutional mandate of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and the mission of the Department of Civil Rights; and

Therefore, be it resolved that the Michigan Civil Rights Commission will continue to act to eliminate discrimination and to ensure fair and equal access to employment, education and economic opportunity for all citizens in the State of Michigan; and

Further, be it resolved, that the Michigan Civil Rights Commission vigorously opposes the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative designed to eliminate and undermine the basic principles of equal treatment under the law as set forth in the Michigan Constitution.

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