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Michigan Senate  
Michigan House of Representatives  
State Capitol Building  
Lansing, Michigan 48913

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today I have signed Enrolled Senate Bill 10 into law. This bill, which was part of a package of bills on criminal justice reform, had overwhelming support in the legislature, passing without a single vote cast against it. The goal of this bill, which is laudable, is to generate a report about parole practices that will help policymakers better understand how many prisoners are not being paroled at their earliest possible release date and why many of these prisoners are being denied parole. This information may help to guide future policy decisions regarding parole.

It should be noted, however, that Enrolled Senate Bill 10 does not capture a complete picture of all the reasons why a prisoner might be denied parole at their earliest possible release date. The law will require the parole board to detail the number of all prisoners who are not granted parole at their earliest possible release date and to categorize the specific reasons for some of these denials. Notably, the seven specific categories set forth in subsection (2) of the new law, which reflect the parole guidelines promulgated by the Department of Corrections to guide the discretion of the parole board, is not an inclusive list of all reasons for a parole board decision.

For instance, while a prisoner may be scored as having a high probability of being paroled, the parole board could determine at the interview stage that the prisoner nevertheless poses an unacceptable risk to public safety. The parole guidelines alone cannot be relied upon to determine if a prisoner presents an ongoing threat to the victim of the crime. Likewise, the parole guidelines alone do not capture important variables such as how well the prisoner can communicate an understanding of the crime and the steps that could be taken to avoid future offenses.

Accordingly, while the data included in a report under this law may be helpful, policymakers must remain mindful of the fact that such a report will not include all the reasons why the parole board might appropriately decide to exercise its discretion in a way that conflicts with the parole guidelines. I would encourage follow up legislation that would improve the quality of information provided to policymakers.

Sincerely,

Rick Snyder  
Governor