

HB 5016 - Microchips

Supporting Testimony

Good morning, Mr./Madame Chair. My name is _____ and I stand here today in full support of HB 5016.

Mr./Madame Chair, we all have loved ones who we want to ensure their safety. Ideally, people know how to take care of themselves, will make responsible choices, and bear the consequences if they make a poor decision. But sometimes, we have to make hard choices for their safety because they no longer have the ability to make sound decisions for themselves. I can't tell you how many children and grandchildren have had to make the difficult decision to move their parents or grandparents into assisted living, remove their access to a vehicle, or monitor their financial decisions. None of this comes from a desire to control our elders, but it comes from a place of love knowing they need additional help. The same types of decisions are made for children with special healthcare needs as they may not know how to make fully informed decisions. We have utilized many protective measures to help those who need it such as surveillance cameras. But, even with these protective measures, vulnerable adults and youth with special healthcare needs are still at a very high risk of being lost or targeted by kidnappers. This bill is vital to addressing these concerns.

Under HB 5016, parents, families, and care centers will have the option to microchip vulnerable adults and youth with special healthcare needs. These chips are about the size of a grain of rice, and will be practically indiscernible to the person being chipped. It will be of no inconvenience to them, but it will help their caretakers know where to find them in case of an emergency. I know a family with several children with Down Syndrome. They are delightful to be around and bring a smile to everyone they meet. But they are also prone to wonder and this family lives in a highly wooded area. What would happen if they simply walked away? Michigan is full of highly extensive forests, and the opportunity to get completely lost is very possible. If their parents had the opportunity to microchip them, they would be able to find them much more quickly. Another thing to consider is the effect that this could have for assisted living centers. A study was done a few years ago noting the rampant problem of elders leaving assisted living centers and getting lost. Between 2018 and 2023, nearly 2,000 adults had left their care facilities and roughly 100 of these cases resulted in the elder's death by exposure to the elements. If only those people could be found more quickly, their lives could have been spared.

Now, I recognize that opponents of this bill may note potential privacy concerns for those who have been microchipped. I will grant you that privacy should be a strong consideration for those in our care, and it is a decision that needs to be weighed carefully, but I would like to note that we already implement similar safety measures if it is deemed that those in our care need it. Webcams, ankle bracelets, etc. are already being used to monitor those who require more supervision for safety's sake. The implantation of microchips would simply be

adding an additional safety measure that is much more inconspicuous than alternatives. As I stated before, the chip is about the size of a grain of rice, and it is far less noticeable than an ankle bracelet or cameras. This bill would create the option for caretakers to implement safety precautions while respecting the dignity of their wards.

For these reasons, I strongly encourage this committee to vote yes on HB 5016 for a safer future. Let us fulfill our role of protecting some of our most vulnerable populations. I will gladly take any questions at this time.

Article

Kristi Tanner and Gina Kaufman, (December 19, 2024). Detroit Free Press, *Detroit sees surge in missing person reports in 2024*.