

April 18, 2018

To: Honorable Members of the House Michigan Competitiveness Committee

Re: Support for SB 652-654 (DEQ Transparency and Accountability)

On behalf of Michigan's agricultural industry, **we urge your support for SB 652-654**. The bills will provide for increased transparency and accountability from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Michigan's food and agriculture industry contributes more than \$101.4 billion annually to the economy and accounts for approximately 1 million jobs. We are the second most diverse state in the country for the types of commodities grown.

Michigan farmers are stewards of the land and water, working every day to ensure we leave things better for the next generation. Michigan farmers have been leaders in environmental programs across the country, leading efforts such as the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) and implementation of the 4R program, as well as Farm Bill conservation programs. Each of these programs rely on cooperation and coordination with local, state and federal partners.

We believe Michigan's regulatory structure must foster economic growth by providing policy makers with a clear understanding of the impact of regulations on business before they vote to support new or more stringent regulations. We also believe regulatory agencies should maintain constitutional roles and reasonable environmental protection based on statute, rule, and science.

Therefore, we support SB 652-654 as they would:

SB 652 - Environmental Rules Committee – Amend Administrative Procedures Act to provide an authoritative body to review, amend, deny and approve DEQ rule promulgation. This is based on a similar law that has operated in Indiana since 1996.

SB 653 - Environmental Permit Appeals Panel – Amend NREPA to develop an appeals board that would, upon request, serve as a scientific permit review panel. This panel could hear an appeal by a permit applicant that has been denied by the DEQ.

SB 654 - Environmental Science Advisory Board – Codify into NREPA the reestablishment of a body to hear scientific environmental evidence and provide recommendation on that evidence to the Governor. Michigan had operated an environmental science advisory board since the 1990s, but it was abolished in 2007 by Executive Order.

It is vital that the agriculture industry continue to have transparency and accountability of our state's environmental laws to make sound and informed decisions.

Again, we urge your support for SB 652-654.

Sincerely,

Carl Bednarski, President
Michigan Farm Bureau

Dave Armstrong, President & CEO
GreenStone Farm Credit Services

Amy Frankmann, Executive Director
Michigan Nursery & Landscape Association

Ray Van Driessche, Director of Gov't Relations
Michigan Sugar Company

Greg Bird, Executive Director
Michigan Vegetable Council

Dawn Drake, General Manager
Michigan Processing Apple Growers

David Williams, President
Michigan Soybean Association

Diane Smith, Executive Director
Michigan Apple Association

Mike Wenkel, Executive Director
Potato Growers of Michigan, Inc.

Maury Kaercher, Executive Director
Michigan Sheep Producers Association

Jim Zook, Executive Director
Michigan Corn Growers Association

Val Vail-Shirey, Executive Director
Michigan Greenhouse Growers Council

Mary Kelpinski, CEO
Michigan Pork Producers Association

Val Vail-Shirey
Prairie Water Users Group

Larry Ensfield, CEO
MBG Marketing – The Blueberry People

Chuck Courtade, Director of Customer Relations
Dairy Farmers of America

Ben Smith, Executive Secretary
Michigan State Horticultural Society

Dan Vogler, President
Michigan Aquaculture Association

Carl VanderKolk, President
Michigan Cattlemen's Association

Amy Smart, Executive Director
Michigan Christmas Tree Association