

Good morning chair and members of the committee, my name is Ben Tirrell representing the Michigan Farm Bureau. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in opposition to House Bill 5205. Michigan Farm Bureau is the largest general farm organization in the state, representing over 40,000 farm families. Our policy positions are shaped through grassroots efforts, where local members engage in development, debate, and adoption of our policies at both county and state levels.

Michigan's food and agriculture industry contributes approximately \$104 billion annually to the economy and accounts for 923,000 jobs or about 22 percent of the state's total workforce. We are the second most diverse state in the country in terms of the variety of agricultural commodities grown, and consequently have numerous processing and value-added businesses which export across the nation and around the world.

Michigan farmers are exemplary stewards and have been leaders in nationally recognized environmental programs, such as the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP), USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Programs (RCPP) and national ecosystem service exchanges.

Michigan Farm Bureau policy recognizes the necessary role the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy plays, explicitly supporting **“timely, effective and consistent enforcement of environmental laws and issuance of permits”**. MDEGLE in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development implement regulations and provide technical assistance in the rare instances where farms have environmental issues.

However, our policy goes on to insist on **“applying sound science and performing economic impact analysis to MDEGLE rules and standards prior to promulgation”**. This is something MDEGLE continues to fail to do, creating arbitrary standards and ignoring the implications, especially for small rural businesses like farms and associated processors. This demonstrated abuse of discretion and lack of transparency would only be further confounded by the legislature's impending dissolution of the environmental rules review committee.

Michigan Farm Bureau members share your commitment to preserving our state's natural resources and protecting the environment. However, House Bill 5205 is not the way to accomplish this goal. Michigan needs thorough scientific and economic review of potential environmental rules, as well as the transparency and opportunities for stakeholder input that the legislature currently provides. The legislature should not relinquish this authority and responsibility.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of our farmer members, I would be happy to try to answer any questions you might have.