



Nov. 12, 2013

Dear Lawmaker:

On behalf of the more than 88,000 activists of Americans for Prosperity-Michigan, I am writing in strong support of HB 4001 and HB 4314. These bills would help ensure local governmental entities across Michigan embrace the principles of transparency and openness.

Progress toward greater transparency at all levels of government should be an ongoing process, one that is continually refined and adjusted to meet the needs of the citizens it serves. After all, shining sunlight on all aspects of government activities remains one of our best tools to stem corruption and waste. It also helps to boost public confidence in those government officials who have been elected to serve us.

FOIA fees can, and often do, stand in the way of transparency. AFP-Michigan faced a \$19,602 bill for requested video footage from the State Police of the right-to-work protests on Dec. 11, 2012. The bulk of the cost (\$19,573) comprised "labor costs to search for, retrieve, review and examine records and to separate exempt material, if any."

HB 4001 and HB 4314 put teeth into Michigan's FOIA statute, and help to ensure citizens who file FOIA requests do so on the same, level playing field as the government officials who are required to fulfill them. These bills also seek to close loopholes that currently allow for bureaucratic game playing aimed at legal avoidance of FOIA laws.

Thomas Jefferson's remarks in 1801 on the importance and need for transparency, particularly in the realm of government finances, are as true today as when they were spoken. The requirements encompassed in HB 4001 and HB 4314 not only move us forward toward greater transparency, but also take us back to the intent of our Founders.

"We might hope to see the finances of the Union as clear and intelligible as a merchant's books, so that every member of Congress and every man of any mind in the Union should be able to comprehend them, to investigate abuses, and consequently to control them." – Thomas Jefferson

Sincerely,

Scott Hagerstrom
State Director
Americans for Prosperity-Michigan