

June 21, 2023
Energy, Communications, and Technology Committee
Michigan House of Representatives
Anderson House Office Building
124 North Capitol Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Chair Scott and the House Energy, Communications, and Technology Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 4759, HB 4760, and HB 4761. The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing science-based policy solutions. UCS has more than 500,000 supporters, including over 7,500 in Michigan.

As multiple studies have shown, electricity standards such as 100% carbon-free and 100% renewable by 2035 are achievable and will produce tremendous benefits for Michigan and other states, including the millions of people who live and work there. For example:

- Last year, UCS, the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition, and other project partners released a [report](#) finding that achievement of 100% renewable electricity standards in U.S. Climate Alliance states, including Michigan, is feasible and produces significant health and economic benefits.¹ The state-specific fact sheet, *On the Road to 100 Percent Renewables for Michigan*, outlines how the state could meet its electricity needs completely and equitably with renewable energy by 2035 and dramatically reduce its use of fossil fuels in vehicles and buildings.²
- An [additional report](#) issued in October 2022 by the Michigan Environmental Council, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and other collaborating partners used the Energy Policy Simulator model to illustrate the feasibility of a 100% carbon-free electricity standard by 2035 while preserving electric system reliability and adequacy of resources; the report's "Climate Solutions Pathway" yields tremendous economic and health benefits for Michigan.³
- Vote Solar and grid modeling experts Vibrant Clean Energy released an analysis *Electrification and Decarbonization Pathways for Michigan*, also in 2022, showing that

¹ <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/road-100-percent-renewables>

² <https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/on-the-road-100-renewable-mi-fact-sheet.pdf>. This analysis assumed that 100% of Michigan electricity sales was met with renewables and that the Fermi 2 and Cook nuclear plants continue operating in accordance with their operating licenses.

³ https://assets.nationbuilder.com/environmentalcouncil/pages/464/attachments/original/1664556648/2030_Report_r9.pdf?1664556648

decarbonization of the electric grid in support of reaching economy-wide carbon reduction goals is achievable, meets electric reliability requirements, and saves the average residential and commercial customer nearly \$800 per year in electric bills compared to current utility plans.⁴

- From a national perspective, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) released a [study](https://www.nrel.gov/analysis/100-percent-clean-electricity-by-2035-study.html) in August 2022 identifying multiple pathways to a net-zero power grid by 2035.⁵ While the analysis did not include provisions of the federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, NREL did release some updated 100% by 2035 scenarios with and without the IRA in its December [2022 Standard Scenarios Report](https://www.nrel.gov/analysis/standard-scenarios.html).⁶ Those scenarios showed that the IRA would accelerate solar and wind deployment and reduce CO₂ emissions to 80% below 2005 levels by 2030.

By enacting a 100% standard, Michigan can join other peer states who have taken action to update their clean energy policies. Since Michigan enacted Public Acts 341 and 342 in 2016, 16 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have adopted 100% carbon-free or net-zero electricity requirements/goals ranging from 2033–2050.⁷ Notably, in September 2021 Illinois enacted the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act which increased the state’s renewable portfolio standard to 50% by 2040 and puts Illinois on a path to 100% carbon-free electricity by 2045. Most recently, in February of this year, Minnesota adopted a 100% carbon-free standard by 2040.

A 100% carbon-free or renewable standard can be further strengthened by more fully centering energy justice and energy democracy. In October 2021, UCS and Soulardarity released a joint analysis showing how Highland Park, Michigan, could generate 100% of its electricity demand with locally owned, clean resources. The report, entitled *Let Communities Choose: Clean Energy Sovereignty in Highland Park, Michigan*,⁸ found that a combination of energy efficiency, rooftop solar, community solar, other types of solar applications, and a community water and energy resource center (CWERC) can provide the average annual electricity demand of Highland Park’s residential and commercial sectors.

We also found that several policy changes are needed to make the vision possible and affordable. Here are some of the recommendations from *Let Communities Choose* that we urge be included in energy-related bills under consideration in the House and Senate:

- Eliminate the ability of utilities to cap distributed generation or restrict the size of customer-owned resources.
- Require utilities to meet higher levels of energy efficiency—such as at least 2% annual savings for electric utilities in HB 4761—and address barriers to adoption.
- Require utilities to offer virtual net metering to facilitate community solar.

⁴ <https://votesolar.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/VCE-VoteSolar-MI.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.nrel.gov/analysis/100-percent-clean-electricity-by-2035-study.html>

⁶ <https://www.nrel.gov/analysis/standard-scenarios.html>

⁷ <https://www.cesa.org/projects/100-clean-energy-collaborative/guide/map-and-timelines-of-100-clean-energy-states/>

⁸ <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/let-communities-choose-clean-energy>

- Improve the compensation mechanisms for customer-owned solar.
- Make lower-cost financing and other investment programs more accessible to lower-income households and communities.
- Create state benchmarks to ensure that clean energy development benefits traditionally disadvantaged communities.

In addition to HB 4759's updates to Michigan's renewable portfolio standard and creation of a 100% carbon-free electricity standard, HB 4760 provides important directives to the Michigan Public Service Commission to consider and address environmental quality, public health, and environmental justice in its decision-making. Meanwhile, HB 4761 expands the crucial, bill-reducing energy efficiency programs utilities must pursue, especially for communities with high energy cost burdens and those disproportionately impacted by social, economic, and environmental harms.

We look forward to providing additional specific recommendations as these bills move forward. Thank you for your consideration of these comments and for supporting a clean, equitable energy future for all Michiganders.

Sincerely,



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