

January 25, 2024

To: House Committee on Natural Resources, Environment, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation  
Re: Michigan Farm Bureau Testimony on Senate Bills 393 and 394

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of Michigan Farm Bureau in strong opposition to Senate Bills 393 and 394. 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.

This grassroots policy recognizes the necessary role that the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (MDEGLE) plays in protecting the environment and ensuring public safety. The overwhelming majority of Michigan farms practice exceptional environmental stewardship and have no interaction with MDEGLE enforcement. However, through growth and diversification, farms and associated businesses are increasingly required to obtain MDEGLE permits. Our policy calls out the importance of timely, effective and consistent issuance of environmental permits based on sound scientific principles and accounting for economic impacts.

To this end, Michigan's regulatory structure must continue to foster economic growth by providing transparency and clarity in developing and issuing such permits. Policymakers should have a clear understanding of the science underlying their decisions, especially in a time where such information is increasingly complex. Regulatory agencies like MDEGLE should also be subject to a review process for their permitting decisions, again based on the highly technical nature of many of these determinations.

In lieu of disbanding the Science Advisory Board and the EGLE Permit Review Commission, the state of Michigan should reinvest in these bodies. These are ultimately valuable tools in reaching our economic development and population growth goals. These entities provide an important level of scientific review and transparency that encourages businesses to invest in our state, providing the jobs Michigan needs to retain talent.

Michigan Farm Bureau members share your commitment to preserving our state's natural resources and protecting the environment. However, this legislation is counterproductive, the state needs additional scientific review of environmental policy and increased permitting transparency, not less. As such, we strongly urge you to oppose Senate Bills 393 and 394.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of our farmer members.

Sincerely,



Ben Tirrell  
Legislative Counsel  
Michigan Farm Bureau