

Hello, my name is Jane Fitkin and I'm a resident of Marquette County in the 109th district, a lifelong Michigander, and a representative of Citizens for a Safe & Clean Lake Superior and Protect the Porkies. Thank you for allowing me to testify today on behalf of over 465,000 petition signers, 213 residents of Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties, and over 80 organizations to urge you to reject any public funding that will aid the Copperwood Mine, especially the request before you today. This request is nearly identical to an MEDC SOAR grant to Highland Copper that has been halted twice now in the Senate Appropriations Committee due to massive public opposition and it being an inappropriate use of taxpayer money, and there is no reason to approve it now.

This request, despite what proponents may say, has a sole, foreign, corporate beneficiary: Highland Copper is a Canadian company who has never developed a mine before, who has been trying for 15 years and failing to raise private funds for the Copperwood Mine, which would be the closest sulfide mine to Lake Superior ever built. While copper continues to remain off of the critical mineral list, and thus have no true urgency to mine, Highland Copper wants to use our taxpayer money in Michigan as an endorsement to spur additional funding to build the mine, which they don't currently have.

Proponents will tell you there is "universal local support" for this project, and that is simply not true. As I mentioned, we have a letter signed by over 200 residents of Gogebic and Ontonagon counties opposing this funding, because they know that jobs this mine creates will likely not go to their neighbors, and will be short term, while creating massive environmental risks and negative effects on eco-tourism at the state park, a major economic driver in the area. In fact, the mining company has admitted that their huge tailings pond would be visible from the Lake of the Clouds overlook in the park, as well as at other nearby overlooks and ski resorts.

This request will not provide community support, as there is no community in northern Wakefield Township, where most of the infrastructure is proposed. While County Road 519 is a paved, 2-lane, year-round road, plowed after every snowfall, there are almost no year-round residents of this northern portion of the township; just a few family camps and seasonal residents, some logging land, and an entrance to Michigan's most prized state park: the Porcupine Mountains.

The Porkies, as well as Lake Superior and the long-term economic health of our communities in the western UP, are what are at stake in this project. We have referenced multiple peer-reviewed studies that show that mining in rural areas, like the western UP, almost always has negative impacts in the long-term on the local economies. Copper mining is a boom-and-bust industry, and with a proposed mine life of less than 11 years, the Copperwood Mine will barely support its 380 or less employees for the life of their family dog, but not long enough to get their kid through high school. Additionally, the mining company has officially stated that those 380 jobs can be as short-term as 6 months, and will go to both Michigan and non-Michigan residents, with no commitment to hiring local residents.

I agree that economic growth and job opportunities are needed in the UP to sustain our communities. However, what we need in the western UP is innovation and the opportunity to evolve and host industries with long term benefits to our residents and environment, not short-term, risky projects like the Copperwood Mine. Please stand with the people of Michigan and reject this funding. Thank you.