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October 6, 2015

Michigan House Natural Resources Committee
Lansing, Michigan

Re: HB 4345 - Microbeads

Dear Committee members,

The Michigan Environmental Council (MEC), a coalition of more than 65 member-based organizations across the state, continues to push for ways to protect Michigan's environment from newly realized threats. One of these threats is plastic microbeads that feature in many cosmetic products. Recent studies in the Great Lakes have shown high levels of these microbeads, in fact, 80% of perch sampled had plastic in their stomachs. These microbeads also attract and soak up harmful chemicals, such as PCBs and BPAs. This indigestible chemical coated plastic hurts the fish and those particles and chemicals may be ingested by humans.

We believe Michigan should move to ban the use of microbeads to prevent them from entering the Great Lakes. HB 4345 does not accomplish that end. The bill includes in the definition of microbead that to be banned it must be nonbiodegradable. This would leave the door open for allegedly biodegradable plastic microbeads to enter our Great Lakes. The bill does not define biodegradable in any way, and what may be biodegradable in a marine system or other disposal environment is not necessarily biodegradable in a freshwater lake ecosystem. This leaves the door open for these harmful microbeads to continue to pollute our freshwater supply. If the "nonbiodegradable" term was removed from the bill, or a proper definition of biodegradable was added, MEC would consider supporting HB 4345.

It also should be noted that this bill is supposedly a model piece of legislation that would ensure a nationwide set of standards on banning microbeads. Six other states have passed bans on these products, and some of those are not using this model bill. Most importantly, California, which makes up 12% of the US population, has enacted a law that bans microbeads, and does not contain the biodegradable language. We view California's law as the true model, given the size of the consumer base compared to the rest of the states.

We urge you to amend HB 4345 into a bill that truly does protect our lakes from plastic microbeads, not one that leaves the Great Lakes open to more pollution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sean Hammond".

Sean Hammond, Deputy Policy Director