

Canton Township Testimony Regarding SBs 1188-1194
House Local Government
Dec. 11, 2018

Chairman Jim Lower and members of the Committee;

On behalf of Canton Township, we are writing to express our opposition to SBs 1188-1194. These bills would preempt local units of government from enacting ordinances that directly pertain to our communities' natural resources and vegetation; even worse, with a broad stroke of the legislature, many municipalities' ordinances would be invalidated. Just as wetlands, drains, flood plains and other natural resources are protected by state and county laws, regulations and ordinance, so should local governments be permitted to protect our trees and other vegetation. Current tree removal ordinances—many of which have been in place for decades—allow local governments to make decisions on how to manage this natural resource for the greater good of the entire community. Trees enhance air quality, manage storm water runoff, prevent erosion, and minimize impacts of the built environment.

As local officials it is our obligation and responsibility to ensure that our communities provide residents with safe, desirable and attractive places to live and raise their families. This should also be a priority for our business community to promote economic development, for our educational system and the families it serves, our seniors who choose to age in place, as well as for recruiting young talent to remain in Michigan.

Management of vegetation, including and especially trees, is a significant part of maintaining a vibrant and growing community. Balancing development and growth with sustainable and strong communities is something that local units of government from across the state do successfully on a daily basis. These are decision that are best left to local governments to account for the varying individual needs of Michigan's diverse communities. These bills are so broadly written as to prohibit local governments from enacting ordinance that, for example, would prohibit trees in a right-of-way causing a safety hazard, or requiring grass over a certain height be mowed so that neighboring property values are not negatively impacted.

Like many communities in southeast Michigan, Canton Township has adopted a balanced tree preservation ordinance, through which Canton has set forth its priorities for balancing population growth while maintaining our local natural resources. It requires developers who are clearing large tracts of property to apply for a tree removal permit. This process then manages removal of trees by requiring a count of the number and types of trees that will be removed and a plan to replant the certain trees either on site or at another location. Managing removal of trees is important for many reasons, including, but not limited to: storm water run-off control, community aesthetics, providing wildlife habitat, improving air quality, and maintaining property aesthetics and values.

We understand that following local ordinance and adhering to community standards is a requirement for any entity that wants to develop in Canton. Canton Township rarely experiences developers who believe the rules do not apply to them. Unfortunately, there are some developers who have worked diligently to ignore and bypass the ordinances that have specifically been enacted to protect its residents and provide a high quality of life. Every ordinance adopted by our Township Board goes through a thorough vetting process that includes public hearings and input. We strive to also maintain a

balance that does not burden growth opportunities, attracts new development and values the residents of the township and protects their property values.

Canton Township believes this legislation will significantly impede the ability of all local governments in Michigan to set forth the aesthetic and environmental standards in their own communities and determine how to manage the natural resources for the good of the people officials are elected to serve. A state-wide preemption to enacting and enforcing local ordinances regarding trees and vegetation may lead to lowering property values as well as create safety issues and other community management issues. We ask that you oppose this legislation.

For questions or additional information please contact Canton Township Supervisor Patrick Williams at (734) 394-5185 or our governmental representative Stephanie Johnson (517) 648-1602