

#8 Larry Stephens



Michigan Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association

April 11, 2018

Michigan House of Representatives
Natural Resources Committee

Re: House Bills 5752 and 5753

Good Morning Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. My name is Larry Stephens. I own an engineering business in Michigan, and am the current President of the Michigan Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (MOWRA). MOWRA is an organization of professionals with the goal of representing all sectors of the onsite wastewater industry. We have been advocating for uniform statewide regulations for almost two decades now, and have tried to participate in every stakeholder's effort toward that end.

Until now, almost all of our effort in the management of our rural onsite wastewater infrastructure has been at the time of original permitting and construction . . . before the "first flush", if you will. This has resulted in a "Use it until it breaks" practice. Onsite system inspection programs in a limited number of counties have demonstrated that this is not a good strategy for sustainability of the wastewater infrastructure serving 25% to 30% of Michigan's population. With the large burden we already have ahead of us in repairing and maintaining our urban centralized wastewater collection and treatment systems, it is time for us to address the rural wastewater infrastructure also. A well-conceived, science-based uniform statewide code will do that.

We believe that the two bills before you today represent a great stride forward toward that effort. In their present form, they do contain elements that are among MOWRA's list of important priorities, namely:

- Training and education of all practitioners in the onsite industry including designers, regulators, installers, inspectors, and maintenance providers. For the record, septic tank pumpers already have required continuing education.
- A thoughtful process by industry professionals to develop statewide standards of practice based upon science and common sense that are applicable anywhere in the state.
- An ongoing process whereby new and advanced treatment technology can be reviewed and approved for use in Michigan by a common process and authority.

- A process to assure ongoing, appropriate, technology-based onsite system maintenance, and a method of accountability to make that happen.

We at MOWRA understand that a stakeholder process is expected to make final adjustments to these bills, and we look forward to actively participating in that process. We feel we have an abundance of experience to contribute to that process.

We do support these bills as containing most of the ingredients for which we have been advocating; and with very few minor edits we could lend 100% support to them.

Remarks by:

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