

21 June 2022

My name is Joan Cottrell and I am a resident of Sharon Township in Washtenaw County.

I never thought I would be here before you, fighting for my health and property values as well as those of my community. Thank you for the opportunity to address you and I hope you will hear my words.

I retired in December of 2020 after working for 42 years. During that time, I proudly purchased my modest ranch home and worked diligently to create my own safe haven. I scraped and painted walls, replaced windows, added a porch, decorated and dug lots of holes and planted many trees and shrubs to create an attractive environment inside and outside my property. I planned to live there until I could no longer live there.

My peace of mind was shattered and my housing situation became tenuous when, in 2021, I learned that a local landowner, who farms what is considered to be prime, valuable agricultural land, suddenly stopped the process of putting his acreage into a conservation program and sold his property to a gravel mining corporation based not in the U.S., but in Dublin, Ireland.

The area where the proposed mine is located is open, yet very populated. I have spent many sleepless nights trying to figure out a way to escape this unenviable predicament and trying to find an affordable housing alternative. In the past 10 months, as many as eight homes have been sold within an approximate two-mile radius of the proposed mine.

I have learned that aggregate mining depletes water quality and water availability. In Sharon Township, everyone relies on well water.

Aggregate mining releases crystalline silica dust. It's been called the new asbestos. I will no longer feel safe sitting under the shade of those trees I planted without worrying about inhaling pollutants that have been proven to cause silicosis, lung cancer and COPD, all irreversible respiratory conditions.

As a final insult, the property value of my home will decrease and selling my home will be complicated due to the close proximity to a 400 acre mine.

It is important that you oppose Senate Bills 429-431. Local oversight of this industry is imperative to help mitigate the proven negative and very serious consequences that

result from aggregate mining. Gravel companies must be held accountable when, not if, they wantonly disregard protocols and ordinances at the expense of residents and in an area that holds no value for them other than the rocks in the ground. Accountability can best be accomplished by local jurisdiction. Local governments are more effective at representing their communities' interests without interference from mining companies and lobbyists. Local units of government best know the character of, and care about, the residents of their community.

I want to take this opportunity to suggest policy changes I feel are necessary to assist residents and the environment with regard to the damaging effects of gravel mining. For aggregate companies proposing to apply to excavate in a NEW, previously unmined area, there should be funding in place, paid for by these very profitable corporations, that provides compensation to residents within a defined geographic area relative to a gravel operation. The compensation should provide free and permanent resource alternatives to contamination and/or loss of well water. Stronger methods to control the mitigation of crystalline silica dust BEYOND just the boundaries of a mine's property lines must be implemented and monitored, and finally, remuneration for loss of property values should be provided to residents who suddenly find themselves in close proximity to a gravel mine. Since Michigan has the second largest reserves of gravel mined in the U.S., that is not too high a price to pay for the aggregate industry to do business in our state.

When you go home and turn on the tap for a glass of water or spend time outside enjoying the beautiful Michigan summer, remember that I no longer take these very basic concepts for granted. I never thought my peace of mind, my physical health and the right to peacefully enjoy my home would be trampled by a multinational mining corporation. Please don't take away any existing protections to my health and property. Your actions will alter my future. Oppose Senate Bills 429-431.

This concludes my comments.