

State Representative Jack O'Malley
Chairman, House Transportation Committee
House Office Building
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

September 6, 2019

Dear Chairman O'Malley and members of the House Transportation Committee:

Heart of the Lakes is part of a coalition of businesses and conservation organizations working toward passage of an expanded Recreation Passport program to model our state program after what the State Park Citizens' Advisory Committee recommended over 10 years ago when the original program was first being discussed by the legislature.

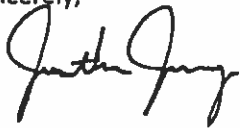
We support the recommendation of the Citizen's Advisory Committee to build the program after the successful Montana program that is an "opt-out" rather than the current "opt-in" approach. We believe that after 10 years of the public being familiar with the value of the Recreation Passport that it is time to return to what was originally envisioned by the legislature.

Participation rates have ranged from the initial rate of 24% to the current 33% and have provided grown from \$5 million to \$13 million for state park operations and maintenance and \$632,000 to \$1.6 million for local recreation grants.

The proposed Recreation Passport legislations with the important "Opt-out" provision will provide significant increases in funding for both our state and local parks and trails. The most current DNR figures indicate a 33% opt-in rate and many predict that with the move to an opt-out approach the participation rate could increase to as much as 50% within a year. This would increase state park funding (operations and infrastructure) from the current \$13 million to over \$24 million.

We applaud the actions of Representatives Howell and Warren in introducing a recent package of bills (HB 4486, 4775 and 4776) that will enhance the value of recreation opportunities for all Michiganders. We also support the proposed increase from 10% to 15% in the amount of the Recreation Passport revenue going to the local recreation grants program that helps to fund local parks and trails. We remain hopeful that this legislation will move quickly and allow Michigan to finally embrace the original version of the Recreation Passport program.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Jarosz
Executive Director

