

**Michigan Association of Recreational Vehicles and Campgrounds (MARVAC)**

**House Bill 5862**

**Tuesday, March 15, 2022 – 9:00AM**

**Testimony**



Mr. Chairman and members of the House Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in favor of House Bill 5862, legislation to appropriately limit the liability for campground owners in Michigan.

My name is Gary Becker and I own Indigo Bluffs in Empire, Michigan. I acquired the property as an older campground in September of 2009 and have worked hard to update it and deliver top guest experiences, earning us national and statewide recognition along the way. With 264 sites at the doorstep of the Sleeping Bear Dunes, we attract visitors from over 30 states and a handful of countries every camping season. I'm also a past Board member of the Michigan Association of RVs and Campgrounds, or MARVAC.

According to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, there are roughly 1,300 licensed RV parks and campgrounds in Michigan – representing more than 147,000 campsites. The RV and camping industry is a \$3.5 billion industry in Michigan, supporting nearly 20,000 jobs. In fact, Michigan ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in RV shipments behind only California, Texas, and Florida.

Nationwide, 56 million people camped in 2021. In 2020 and 2021 combined, there were 14 million households new to camping. The camping and RV lifestyle has been a huge part of who we are in Michigan for decades and only continues to grow as more learn what our great outdoors has to offer.

Unfortunately, Michigan campgrounds regularly face lawsuits over incidents over which they have no control – issues like bicycle accidents, campfire incidents, and dog bites. Even when campground owners take all steps to protect visitors and enforce safety rules, when the actions by third parties visiting campgrounds result in an injury, the campground owner faces lawsuits – even if the owner did everything right.

Lawyers frequently sue innocent campground owners rather than the party at fault because they view the campground owners as having “deep pockets.” Although those lawsuits typically settle, they cause unnecessary legal fees and time for circumstances outside the campground owner’s control.

Limiting liability for campground owners to issues they are responsible for levels the playing field and appropriately allocates liability to the person responsible for an injury rather than a campground owner who has done everything within their power to enforce rules and ensure safety.

House Bill 5862 is balanced, fair, and limited in scope. It does not absolve campground owners when they are at fault or within the campground owner's control, instead it only provides protection when a third-party is at fault.

The legislation will promote Michigan's outdoor recreation industry by incentivizing construction and continued operation of Michigan's private campgrounds and is a boost for Michigan's small businesses in time for this summer's camping season.

Thank you again for your time. MARVAC and I encourage your support of this measure and I'd be happy to try and answer any questions you may have.