Testimony from Veronica Horn, Executive Vice-President of the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce

Chairman Drolet and Members of the House Government Operations Committee. Good Morning. My name is Veronica Horn and I am Executive Vice President of the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce as well as serving as Chairperson of the Community Advisory Panel for the University of Michigan Dioxin Exposure Study.

The Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors recently passed a unanimous resolution in support of HB 4617 and Senate Bill 390, known as the Homeowner Fairness Bills.

As you know, the legislation would end the Department of Environmental Quality's broad-brush designation of property in the Saginaw Valley as a 'contaminated facility' based on the conclusion that if one property in an area tests above the state average for residential dioxin levels of 90 ppt, all properties in that area are labeled "contaminated facilities".

When the DEQ came out with these new 'standards', The Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce expressed its deep concerns to our area legislators. This position is certainly not based on science. It is totally subjective. It paints an entire area with no regard to dioxin levels. This is somewhat akin to failing an entire class of students because one student is failing the class.

One of the key priorities of the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce is to assist our economic development arm, Saginaw Future, with economic development in the Saginaw Valley Region. The 'facility' designation certainly impacts our abilities to retain existing and attract new business. These prospects question how the 'contaminated facility' designation would impact their investment. Many simply look for another location out of this area and don't look back.

For the DEQ to suggest that a higher dioxin level in a specific spot translates into designating an entire area a 'contaminated facility' poses a much broader threat to more than just The Saginaw Valley. We should question where the geographic boundaries exist under this designation. Is it 500 feet? ¼ mile? A mile? Why not one hundred miles? Without sound science and exact testing of each parcel, this totally subjective DEQ designation threatens the entire

State of Michigan. It is wantonly reckless to attach this label to a large stretch of land without first testing the entire property. This legislation can help stop lengthy economic and social nightmares for entire regions in Michigan.

The Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, which represents over 1,200 members in The Saginaw Valley, determined that this was an ill-based decision by the DEQ. We believe that Representative Moolenaar and Senator Goschka's legislation will begin to repair the damage this designation has already caused. It will require that soil or water samples or both collected from the parcel show dioxin in excess of concentration levels.

Passing this legislation will encourage Saginaw Valley Employers to stay and will remove a serious impediment for prospective investors to locate in the area by eliminating the stigma associated with the facility designation. They will no longer have to worry about the affect on their property or prospective property where no contamination exists.

Again, The Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce and I urge you to support this legislation. Michigan needs to become more attractive to increase economic development. Passing this common sense legislation will help us move back in that direction.

Chairman Drolet and Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. I urge your support of the Homeowner Fairness Bills. Thank you.

SAGINAW
COUNTY
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE

Saginaw, MI: *New legislation has been introduced to give relief to property owners with State imposed 'facility' labeling dealing with dioxin.*

In a regularly scheduled board meeting on April 28, 2005, the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce voted unanimously to endorse legislation introduced by Representative Moolenaar and Senator Goschka, HB4617 and SB390, regarding the 'facility' designation on properties. This legislation exempts homestead properties from the 'facility' designation unless a property owner chooses to keep the 'facility' designation, or until the specific site has been tested and determined to be a facility.

ACCREDITED
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