SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

MICHIGAN CHAPTER

May 1, 2015

To: Chairman Nesbitt and members of the House Energy Policy Committee

RE: House Bill 4297

On behalf of our 60,000 members and supporters in Michigan, **the Sierra Club urges a NO vote on HB 4297 (Nesbitt),** a bill that would undermine Michigan's renewable energy standard, by classifying the incineration of hazardous waste as renewable energy, and repeal the state's energy optimization standards for both electric and natural gas utilities.

Michigan's renewable energy and efficiency standards have been unparalleled successes – they've created jobs and enhanced economic development, while simultaneously protecting the health of Michigan's citizens and the Great Lakes by reducing dirty, costly fossil fuels in our energy sector. Now is the time for our elected officials to increase Michigan's renewable energy standard as both Michigan agencies and nationally acclaimed energy experts show that our state can dramatically increase its renewable energy and efficiency capacity while boosting our economy and protecting our environment.

By contrast, HB 4297 undermines Michigan's progress to date and puts our future at risk. Waste incineration does not produce renewable energy. It burns and destroys recyclable materials and emits high levels of pollution and carbon dioxide. According to the US EPA, waste incineration emits more carbon dioxide per unit of energy than any other form of electricity, contributing to the negative consequences of climate change.

Repealing Michigan's energy optimization standard contradicts both Governor Snyder's plan to eliminate energy waste and the outstanding success of the current measure in saving ratepayers money. Michigan residents today save $3.55 for every dollar invested in our current efficiency program, while simultaneously preventing carbon pollution. Michigan's energy efficiency industry is a driving force in our economy that employs more than 46,000 Michiganders, while also averting greenhouse gas emissions.

HB 4297 is a dangerous proposal that takes Michigan in the wrong direction when it comes to protecting our state from climate disaster. Climate disruption is an urgent threat to our everyday lives and our future, and its impact is already being felt in Michigan. Ninety-seven percent of climate scientists agree that global climate change is happening and that human activity is driving it. Climate disruption is about more than temperature – it's about disrupting the basic weather patterns that affect almost everything in our lives - our water supplies, how we grow our food, the kinds of diseases we deal with, and the ability to keep our families safe.

We can already see the effects of climate disruption all across America: unprecedented droughts and wildfires in Western states, record-breaking heat in the Southwest and Midwest, Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy, extreme winter weather in traditionally warm states, and melting glaciers in Alaska. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent, harming people, their economic well-being, their health, their homes, and their futures. Right here in Michigan, we've seen cherry and apple crops

109 E. Grand River Avenue, Lansing, Michigan 48906 (517) 484-2372
michigan.chapter@sierraclub.org www.sierraclub.org/michigan

completely devastated due to abnormal and extreme weather patterns exacerbated by climate disruption. The time to fight climate disruption is now, but enacting HB 4297 would contribute to more climate disasters.

We call on our elected leaders to combat climate disruption by moving Michigan beyond fossil fuels and towards true clean energy sources like wind, solar, and energy efficiency. According to a Yale study from last year, 61% of Michiganders believe climate change is happening, 76% believe we should regulate carbon pollution, and 60% support increasing our state's renewable energy standard.
The message is clear: Michiganders oppose HB 4297 and want more renewable energy and efficiency instead.

Michigan currently spends $22 billion a year importing fossil fuel into the state, for both transportation and power. We get 100% of our fuel for coal and nuclear energy and 80 percent of our natural gas from other states. Solar and wind are fuel free; once installed, the cost of energy is zero. That is all money that then gets spent in Michigan instead of sent out of state to import fuel. Our public policies should support renewable energy development and energy optimization instead of continuing our reliance on polluting and volatile fossil fuels like natural gas and coal.

The Sierra Club specifically calls on the Michigan legislature to:

- Increase Michigan's renewable energy standard to 30% by 2030, as the Public Service Commission and Energy Office have all said is readily achievable.
- Increase Michigan's energy optimization standard from 1% to 2% annually.
- Remove the existing spending cap on Michigan's energy efficiency program
- Ensure that "clean" or "renewable" energy is not redefined to include any fossil fuels, nuclear energy, or energy from incinerating wastes.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote NO on HB 4297. Votes pertaining to this bill will be included in the Sierra Club's legislative scorecard.

Sincerely,

Mike Berkowitz
Legislative and Political Director
Sierra Club Michigan Chapter