

April 26, 2016

The Honorable Rep. Jeff Farrington
Chair, House Committee on Tax Policy
PO Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Representative Farrington,

We are writing to express our concerns about House Bills 5557 and 5558. As you know, the bill would grant considerable tax credits to corporations, including AK Steel, formerly known as Severstal Dearborn. We support amendments to HB 5557 and 5558 that would condition the transfer of business tax credits on proof of a taxpayer's compliance with pollution control laws.

AK Steel is located in Dearborn's south end, near the notorious 48217 ZIP code, where residents surrounded by factories and refineries breathe air given a toxicity score by the EPA that's 45 times the statewide average. Arab immigrants largely comprise the Dearborn's South End, where AK Steel, other industrial plants, and the Marathon petroleum refinery are also located. Controversy has surrounded the plant, as it has violations dating back to the 1990s. The community that is directly impacted by these violations continues to be wary that any real progress is being made to address these concerns because of the lack of continued updating and engagement by the U.S. EPA and Department of Justice regarding the status of enforcement negotiations.

The plant is one of Michigan's worst air polluters. They violated their 2006 Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)-issued air permit, releasing pollutants at levels up to 725 times higher than the permit initially allowed. Since July 23, 2010, there had been 117 citizen complaints alleging fallout and smokestack violations from varying processes at the plant; and more than 20 violation notices sent to the company.

Despite new ownership, the plant has continued to receive violation notices from the MDEQ, as recently as November 2015. Given the current sentiment of mistrust when it comes to protecting our public health present in our state, it sends the wrong message when polluters are rewarded with tax breaks while they are allowed to carry on with activities that damage the air we breathe.

We urge you to require AK Steel to update pollution-control technology at its plant before granting it tax breaks. Our health and quality of life should be prioritized over the welfare of industry.

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