

Testimony of Rep. Andrew Fink in support of HB Ethics Reform Package, 5-4-21

Good Afternoon,

I'm here today to speak in support of HB 4680 and the bills which accompany it, and would establish a non-partisan ethics committee in Michigan law.

There have been attempts for many years to take steps to increase the level of trust that the citizens of Michigan have in their elected representatives, and this package is a way to address those concerns and move the conversation forward. Those we represent deserve to know that their representatives are acting according to the interest of the state as a whole, not their own financial interest.

My bill would establish a committee in each house of the legislature which would receive and review complaints, and then issue recommendations to the house as a whole. The committees would be populated with equal numbers of the majority and minority parties, meaning that any recommendation would necessarily include members of both parties.

Among the items that the committee would be responsible for reviewing are financial disclosures from each member of the legislature. Thanks to the efforts of Representative LaGrand over the last several years, a majority of the house of representatives has indicated support for a financial disclosure, though despite that no financial disclosure package has become law. I believe that the concerns of those skeptical of past efforts are addressed in this package, and we now have a chance to impose meaningful changes here.

There are also bills in this package which address conflicts of interest in the administration. That topic is equally important, as only addressing ethical issues in the legislature would be only solving half the issue.