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Stephan W. Currie, Executive Director

March 25, 2021

Honorable State Representative Gary Howell and Members
House Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Committee
124 N. Capitol Ave.
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Chairman Howell and Committee Members,

The Michigan Association of Counties supports in concept the amendments to the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act as introduced in House bills 4454 – 4461, with a few reservations. Let me first start out by saying that MAC fully appreciates the time, dedication and work that went into the bills and commends the bill sponsors, interest groups, staff and the department for their efforts and the compromises that have resulted in the product before you today. The need for a modernization of the statute to reflect an emphasis on materials management, sustainable disposal and additional environmental protections will benefit generations to come.

The reservations MAC has is not about the goals, the protections, or the regulations, but with the challenges the planning agencies will face with regard to the process for writing and adopting the materials management plan. The three-year process includes a significant level of outreach, communication, coordination, research, negotiation, scientific expertise, approvals, amendments and eventual implementation. It is an inclusive, necessary process but one that will require resources that will likely exceed the allocation proposed in the legislation. I do not think we will know the full extent of the costs or challenges until the process gets underway. Nonetheless, I would be remiss if I did not express concern over the costly and time-consuming process necessary to achieve plan development let alone the additional expenses likely to be incurred in the achievement of the recycling goals set forth in the bills. Although it is the right thing to do for our planet, our future generations and our communities, the financial return on investment is, in many cases a deterrent.

One other issue that cause concern for MAC is the ability of a community outside of the planning area weighing in on the developing plan. This should be an optional allowance at the discretion of the planning agency and not subject to overrule.

There are many positive statements MAC could make about the package of bills, but the overall support for the package from all the interest groups lends to that fact it is a good product and should be supported by the committee and legislature. We encourage you to vote for the bills, while still recognizing that the financial and administrative support for the planning agencies may need to be enhanced.

Respectfully,

Deena Bosworth
Director of Governmental Affairs