



Dear members of the House Natural Resources, Environment, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on HB 4359. My name is Samantha Pickering and I'm the Public & Environmental Health Policy Coordinator at Michigan Environmental Council. This important piece of legislation will repeal the ban on local governments banning or regulating the use of auxiliary containers, which includes many types of plastic materials. Repealing this ban is beneficial for the health of both the environment and humans, and is also good for local control of issues within each municipality's respective jurisdiction. Many members of the Michigan House and Senate have come from a local government background and understand the importance of allowing local governments to make decisions based on the best interests of their communities.

Plastic is an indestructible material that does not break down or biodegrade. Overtime, it breaks apart into smaller pieces known as microplastics (less than 5 mm) and nanoplastics (microscopic) which persist in the environment. According to a review researchers from the University of Toronto and the Winnipeg-based International Institute for Sustainable Development conducted, almost 90 percent of freshwater samples from the Great Lakes over the past ten years have levels of plastic that are deemed unsafe for wildlife. Aquatic wildlife often mistake plastic for food, and having no nutritional value, it tricks their stomachs into thinking it's full and can ultimately starve them to death.

An incredibly pervasive material, not only can humans be exposed to plastics through consuming fish, but it's also in the air we breathe and the water we drink. Plastic pollution is a critical and emerging public health concern as they have been found in the human bloodstream, vital organs, and even the placenta of fetuses. It can cause cancer, disrupts hormone functions, and can cause lung disease.

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Single use plastics are a category of plastics that are designed to be disposable and cannot be recycled. Almost every piece of plastic that has been made still exists on Earth today. Approximately half of the plastic that is produced each year is single use, and it's the majority of the litter we see in our communities which leads to various adverse impacts. For example, plastic bags that end up as litter can clog sewers and drains, adding to our current flooding issues from extreme weather events. Giving local governments the ability to regulate these materials within their communities can improve the overall health and well-being of their constituents and the environment.

To date, we have seen limited federal or state action on this issue, and we shouldn't stand in the way of local governments, many of whom look to lead on this important environmental matter. The Rochester Institute of Technology estimates that 22 million pounds of plastic enter the Great Lakes each year, which is the drinking water source for millions of people, a foundation of Michigan's economy, and a source of pride and joy for all Michiganders. By passing HB 4359, you will be allowing local governments to take one step towards protecting our precious Great Lakes, the public, and the environment as a whole.

I appreciate your time and consideration. We urge passage of HB 4359, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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