



# SIERRA CLUB

## MICHIGAN CHAPTER

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March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

To: Chairman Brandt Iden and Members of the Committee

RE: House Bill 5423 – Unclaimed Bottle Deposits Bill

On behalf of our 150,000 members and supporters in Michigan, the Sierra Club expresses our opposition to HB 5423. House Bill 5423 would alter Michigan's bottle deposit laws and strip \$21 million away from funds dedicated to contaminated site cleanup and redevelopment from unreturned bottle deposits.

The revenue provided by the unclaimed bottle deposits supports statewide contaminated site cleanups and brownfield redevelopment efforts to protect public health and the environment. In addition, it helps provide grants to local governments for waste reduction efforts. Unclaimed bottle deposits have been one of the primary sources of funding for the 130 staff responsible for the oversight of cleanup of contaminated sites. Furthermore, there are 30 staff who oversee and administer 65 federal superfund sites whose costs are supported by this funding.

In 2020 alone, this funding will go directly towards the cleanup costs of 25 different sites throughout the state. Also, the staff funded from the cleanup and redevelopment fund are currently overseeing 88 projects, projects which are in some of your districts. Without this funding, these projects would no longer be able to move forward because we'd no longer have the staff to oversee them and the 25 sites that are being cleaned up with the remaining escheats would be halted.

With the toxic green ooze, the dock collapse into the Detroit River, and PFAS contamination -- the number of contaminated sites in Michigan has exploded across the state, going from an officially reported 7,300 in 2018 to 24,000 and growing. Even with the funds that are currently available, we don't have enough money to protect us from the imminent threats to our water and communities posed by these sites. HB 5423 exacerbates the problem even further with this cut.

We have suffered years of drastic and dangerous funding cuts to programs designed to protect us from the legacies of corporate polluters. We need to put more money into cleanup, not gut one of the funds designated for it.

To be clear, the Sierra Club is not opposed to cracking down on fraud and believes that anyone committing fraud should be held accountable. However, decimating and raiding the Cleanup and Redevelopment Fund without any other policy solution to ensure continued or strengthened funding for contaminated site cleanup is simply not the answer and is a nonstarter. We will not support any legislation which will take or cut any funding for the fund.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote NO on HB 5423 as it is currently written.

Sincerely,

Tim Minotas  
Deputy Legislative Director  
Sierra Club Michigan Chapter