



September 17, 2019

Representative Julie Brixie
S-1088 House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Representative Brixie,

We write on behalf of Fishin' Michigan, a local fishing club based in Mid-Michigan, in support of the draft YOUTH FISHING LICENSE bills sent to us by Legislative Director Dan Opsommer. After discussing the matter at our monthly membership meeting on September 16th, **we are notifying you of our full support for this two-bill package.**

It will be of interest to you that our organization has hosted an annual youth fishing program since 2010 in which approximately 1800 youth and their families have participated over the past nine years at no cost to participants. The program has become very popular, with workshops held on the first three Saturdays of May at various Ingham County Parks and three follow-up outings in June for participating families at different venues in Ingham and Clinton counties.

Of significance to your bills, for the first six years of the program, the Program purchased the \$2.00 voluntary Youth Fishing licenses and the \$1.00 DNR Sports Card for each participating youth. At our "Rules and Ethics Learning Station" during each workshop, conservation officers explained to the kids and their parents that the voluntary licenses that they were being given by our program would bring \$9.00 of federal funds to the State of Michigan in support of fishery management and natural resources. This gave the youth not only a feeling of ownership in the fishery but also a sense of pride that they were doing something positive for the environment. Parent comments were enthusiastic and supportive.

We recall one young female participant who appeared to us as having a very poor self-image and a total lack of confidence. Before her involvement with our program was over, we saw a positive change in her personality and level of confidence. At first, she wouldn't bait her own hook nor touch a fish. Soon she did it all, including taking fish off the hook, and she asked for a copy of the DNR Fishing Guide to take home so she could identify all the fish species she caught. Shortly after the program, we received a hand-written Thank You note from this young girl, with an ending comment: "Enclosed is \$2.00 for you to buy a fishing license for a kid next year."

In 2016, the Youth Fishing License option was eliminated by MDNR. We miss being able to give these to our participating kids. We know this will not likely be a large additional source of license sales immediately, but it gets kids off to a good start in becoming stewards for the environment. License sales to youth could also yield a data base for further education and promotion of our fishery resources to families who care.

Thank you for your initiative to introduce this legislation. We are hopeful for success and look forward to following its progress through the legislature. Please contact either of us if we can be further advocates for this initiative.

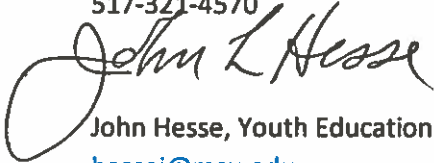
Sincerely,



Mike Boedeker, President, Fishin' Michigan

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517-321-4570



John Hesse, Youth Education Chairperson

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Cc: Daniel Opsommer
Legislative Director

Learning Station:

Regulations and Ethics



Through a partnership with the MDNR Law Division, a uniformed Conservation Officer was present at each workshop. Here the kids learn how to identify fish species most commonly caught in Michigan, the basic regulations and how to use the Fishing Guide, how to measure fish accurately, why conservation is important, and proper ethics to be a good angler. Each youth is given a special tape measure to keep and are encouraged to use it. They are told that they will be receiving a complimentary voluntary youth fishing license in the mail and are informed that for each license sold in Michigan, the Federal government gives approximately \$9.00 to the State to fund the fishery programs. The Conservation Officers have available recently caught fish specimens and rubber casts of fish on which the youth can practice measuring techniques. When the session is completed, each youth is given another fish sticker to put on his/her tackle box.

Appendix I: Voluntary Youth Fishing License and Sports ID Card



During the Regulation/Ethics Learning Station and in the cover letter for the package mailed after the workshop, it is explained to the youth that by buying voluntary youth fishing licenses, they are supporting Michigan's fishery programs. Funds raised by license sales are the primary source of funding for fisheries management. Although this first license is purchased for the youth who participate in the youth fishing program, the importance of renewing their licenses in following years is stressed. The Sports ID Card will never have to be renewed, even after the youth become adults.