



Testimony of Camden Weber, State Partnerships and Political Manager, NextGen America  
Support for SB 271, SB 273, SB 502, and SB 519  
Before the Michigan House of Representatives Energy, Communications, and Technology  
Committee  
November 1, 2023

Distinguished Members of the Michigan House of Representatives Energy, Communications,  
and Technology Committee,

NextGen America is the leading national organization for engaging young people in the democratic process through civic education, registration and mobilization. We invite 18-to-35 year olds — the largest and most diverse generation in American history — into our democracy to ensure our government works for them and to advocate for legislative solutions to the dire challenges facing our society and the world.

Thank you for allowing us to submit testimony in support of SB 271, SB 273, SB 502, and SB 519. Each of these bills is necessary to transition Michigan to 100% clean energy and NextGen America encourages the committee to vote **FAVORABLY** on all bills. Climate disaster is already at our doorstep, and it is imperative that Michigan reduces its carbon emissions immediately to prevent further catastrophe.

### **Young Michiganders' Health Suffers Due to Inaction on Climate Change**

Climate change is the defining challenge of our time, and we are collectively living everyday with its effects. The physical and mental health impacts of the climate crisis are pervasive, especially for young Michiganders who must navigate how to establish their own futures, careers and families amidst climate disaster and uncertainty. Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that “suicide rates among young people have trended upward over the past two decades, complementing an epidemic of mental health challenges, and particularly affecting teenage girls, youths of color and those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.”<sup>1</sup> Further, Generation Z and Millennials are more likely to be “alarmed” or “concerned” than old Americans.<sup>2</sup>

Physical distress caused by climate change including heat and droughts, among other impacts, negatively impacts mental health. After living through 2023, which has been the hottest year

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/s44220-023-00059-3>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2023/10/mental-health-youth-report-2023.pdf>

ever recorded thus far,<sup>3</sup> it must be understood that heat has been linked to violence in communities, mood and anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, higher use of emergency mental health services, and higher rates of suicide.<sup>4</sup> The frequency, duration, and severity of droughts is increased by climate. Such events are associated with psychological distress such as anxiety and depression and a 2021 study found that people who experienced drought were also expected to experience severe psychological distress in the 2.5-3 years after the climate event.<sup>5</sup>

Action—or inaction—at the legislature has a direct impact on the wellbeing of young Michiganders. In fact, research shows the perceived failure of governments to take action on climate change has been associated with distress among young people.<sup>6</sup> If you fail to act, the rising generations of Americans will live the longest with the devastating effects of climate change and feel the worst impacts of unchecked climate catastrophe. It is vital that the Committee passes the MI Healthy Climate Plan package, so the livelihoods of all Americans—especially of the younger and future generations—are secured.

### **The MI Healthy Climate Plan is the Solution**

The MI Healthy Climate Plan—made up in part by Senate Bills 271, 273, 502, and 519—is Michigan’s best chance to reduce climate change causing carbon emissions and tackle the issue in an equitable manner.

- Senate Bill 271 requires utilities to increasingly generate energy using renewables and transition away from carbon-intensive sources. Specifically, the bill requires 15% renewable usage through 2027, 50% from 2030 to 2034, and 60% from 2035 onward. Further, utilities would be required to have clean energy portfolios of 80% by 2035 and reach 100% clean energy by 2040.<sup>7</sup>
- Senate Bill 273 increases the energy waste reduction requirements for electric generation and outlines equity goals for utility companies to meet — including offering energy efficiency savings programs in low-income areas and requiring utilities to hire diverse workforces for energy waste reduction programs.<sup>8</sup> The bill also requires energy providers to create a low-income energy waste reduction program and direct 25% of its energy waste reduction spending to the program.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1141937>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2023/10/mental-health-youth-report-2023.pdf> (Mullins & White, 2019; Thompson et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2006; Kim et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2021).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2023/10/mental-health-youth-report-2023.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2023/10/mental-health-youth-report-2023.pdf>

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[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(nqyzt5i5yi4ouisde5dvcapc\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectname=2023-SB-0271](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(nqyzt5i5yi4ouisde5dvcapc))/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectname=2023-SB-0271)

<sup>8</sup>

[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(xs52il2goztjvlcrmbtx1hs0\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectname=2023-SB-0273](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(xs52il2goztjvlcrmbtx1hs0))/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectname=2023-SB-0273)

<sup>9</sup>

<https://michiganadvance.com/2023/10/27/michigan-senate-advances-clean-energy-legislation-amid-fierce-opposition-from-republicans/>

- Senate Bill 502 directs the Michigan Public Service Commission to ensure equitable access to energy efficiency programs, increase the amounts that utility companies must pay in cost recovery cases and outline how utilities plan to provide energy to their customers equitably.<sup>10</sup> The bill also requires the Department of Energy Great Lakes and Environment (EGLE) to assess the environmental justice and public health impacts of these plans.<sup>11</sup>
- Senate Bill 519 creates a Community and Worker Economic Transition Office within the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. This office will be tasked with assisting workers' transition to new careers created by the state's pivot to renewable energy generation. It is imperative that no worker gets left behind in the transition and that our communities equitably benefit from the energy transition.<sup>12</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The Michigan State Legislature must do everything in its power to heed calls from the increasingly active cohort of young Michiganders to address the climate crisis, including passing SB 271, SB 273, SB 502, and SB 519. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(p4kofjcezwyi4kpveorq0zr2\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectName=2023-SB-0502](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(p4kofjcezwyi4kpveorq0zr2))/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectName=2023-SB-0502)

<sup>11</sup>

<https://michiganadvance.com/2023/10/27/michigan-senate-advances-clean-energy-legislation-amid-fierce-opposition-from-republicans/>

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[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(2yowaiodyvg4xqzyhopjasm5\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectName=2023-SB-0519](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(2yowaiodyvg4xqzyhopjasm5))/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectName=2023-SB-0519)