



# Written Comments:

## House Bill 6448

Heather Rivard,  
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**Heather Rivard Testimony – HB 6448 (Judiciary Committee)**

- **Good Morning. Chairman Filler, Vice Chairs LaFave and LaGrand, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. And thank you Representative Calley for sponsoring this vital legislation.**
  
- **My name is Heather Rivard, I'm the Senior Vice President for Electric Distribution for DTE – but I'm coming before you today in a different capacity:**
  
- **Back in February, in preparation for what was shaping up to be a worldwide pandemic, DTE initiated its Incident Command structure to navigate the Company and our roughly 11,000 or so employees through this difficult time, with an emphasis on safety for our employees and customers.**
  
- **I've been working as the Deputy Incident Commander on that team since March – with a general oversight for DTE's handling of the pandemic.**
  
- **I will tell you what most of you probably already know and have felt yourselves in the capacity of your own jobs and lives – this has been a very long haul.**
  
- **We're proud to have stayed the course of what feels like one marathon after another:**
  - **We've utilized our partnership with Henry Ford Health system to test employees and contractors;**
  
  - **We have a medical team that works around the clock performing contact tracing and checking in on our sick employees – whether they're currently working at a DTE facility or they're working remotely. I and other executives personally make calls to check on the wellbeing of our sick employees.**
  
  - **We've sequestered healthy employees both at home and in hotels in places where the public does not have access to their space – many of them spent the Thanksgiving holiday away from their families in hotels so that we can keep them safe.**
  
  - **We've been able to secure and deploy PPE to all of our employees and contractors, and also to frontline healthcare workers, some of our local Fire and Police units, and to our municipal utility peers when they've needed them.**
  
- **I could go on but I'm not here today to tell you all of the things we feel good about, I'm here because we're at a point where we need your support in moving the legislation you have before you.**

- The issue is mandatory quarantine for our healthy critical workers. Currently, if one of our critical utility workers are exposed to someone with COVID or someone with symptoms of COVID (whether they've tested positive or not) we have to send them into quarantine for 14 days.
- The impact on our available critical workforce to handle things like power plant and gas system operations, nuclear facility security, natural gas main leak repair, and storm restoration – is significant.
- Our data tells us that right now about 39% of our employees in quarantine do not have any symptoms whatsoever.
- Last month we had a catastrophic storm that impacted 285,000 customers. We had approximately 100 critical electric distribution workers in quarantine who could have assisted with our response – this includes 15-20 line crews who are critical to our restoration efforts.
- While we can generally call other states for mutual assistance, we're finding that assistance to be harder to come by as utilities in other states are experiencing their own shortages and work impacts.
- The Federal Government through the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has recognized the energy industry as a critical function, and we're asking for your help aligning Michigan with their standard.
- The legislation before you today would do just that, by designating Michigan's energy workers as critical – the same designation our state has given to healthcare, emergency response personnel, Child Protective Services employees and Corrections Workers.
- This would apply to only our most critical workers as defined by Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, not our employees who have been working from home for months – they will continue to do so.
- Rest assured that we are committed to keeping our employees and the public safe, and to delivering safe and reliable electricity and natural gas to our 3.1 million customers, so those actions I talked about a few minutes ago: testing, sequestration, PPE, contact tracing – we're going to continue with all of them because it's the right thing to do.
- Thank you for having me – I'm happy to answer any questions to the extent that I can.