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Audubon Great Lakes

Michigan House Energy Committee

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 4759

Chair Scott and Members of the Michigan House Energy Committee,

I am writing to you in my capacity as the Policy Director for Audubon Great Lakes to express our strong support for House Bill 4759. Audubon Great Lakes is the regional arm of the National Audubon Society, which was founded in 1905 and is dedicated to the conservation and protection of birds and their habitats. Audubon represents nearly 2 million supporters nationwide, including more than 45,000 Michiganders, and we believe that this legislation sets the state on a strong path towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions while benefiting Michigan's economy and birds.

Birds are telling us that the time to take climate action is now. North America has lost more than three billion birds over the past half-century, and [two-thirds](#) of North American bird species at risk of extinction due to climate change. In order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and move our economy to net-zero by 2050, we need more sources of renewable energy generation and policies that support reducing carbon emissions.

Michigan's diverse avian species, including the Kirtland's warbler, piping plover, and common loon, are already facing significant challenges due to habitat loss, changing weather patterns, and other climate-related impacts. Storm events and rising water levels caused by climate change are threatening the habitat that species like the Black Tern need to survive. Black Terns have experienced a dramatic population decline over the past 50 years, with only 1.4 percent of the nationwide population remaining in the state. Accelerating the development of responsibly sited renewable energy in Michigan will help to address this threat.

HB 4759, which aims to increase the renewable portfolio standard (RPS) in Michigan to 40% by 2035 and 100% by 2050, provides a clear roadmap for transitioning to a clean energy future. By accelerating the deployment of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar, this legislation will help mitigate the impacts of climate change and safeguard our state's unique biodiversity.

Renewable energy projects must be properly sited in order to ensure benefits to both birds and people. By strategically locating renewable energy facilities in areas that minimize impacts on sensitive ecosystems and conducting thorough environmental assessments, we can ensure that renewable energy and conservation efforts go

hand in hand. Audubon supports responsibly-sited projects that avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to birds and their habitat.

Moreover, the renewable energy sector holds significant economic potential for Michigan. The expansion of renewable energy infrastructure will stimulate job growth, attract investment, and foster innovation in clean technologies. By passing HB 4759, Michigan can position itself as a leader in the clean energy economy, creating sustainable employment opportunities while reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

Embracing a renewable energy future also translates to better air quality and health outcomes for humans and birds alike. Climate change and pollutants from fossil fuel power plants contribute to lower air quality, significantly exacerbating negative health outcomes for people, from respiratory conditions, heart conditions, and other illnesses. Birds are exposed to more airborne particles than humans because they have a higher breathing rate and spend more time in the open air. [Studies have repeatedly shown](#) that exposure to these pollutants also has significant health impacts on birds, including incidents of DNA mutations, reduced egg production and hatching, increased clutch or brood abandonment, lower red blood cell counts, and reduced growth. By passing HB 4759, Michigan can improve health outcomes for its communities and birds, all while improving air quality.

Audubon Great Lakes thanks the Michigan House Energy Committee for recognizing the urgency of addressing climate change and taking steps to transition to a renewable energy future. We strongly encourage you to support and advance House Bill 4759, demonstrating Michigan's commitment to environmental stewardship, economic prosperity, and the well-being of Michigan's birds and people.

Audubon Great Lakes looks forward to working with you to ensure the successful passage of HB 4759. If you require further information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Adam Forrer
Policy Director
Audubon Great Lakes