



SIERRA CLUB

MICHIGAN CHAPTER

To: Chairman Christine Morse and Honorable Members of the State House DHHS appropriations subcommittee

RE: Sierra Club Support For Whole Home Retrofits and Water Affordability, Apr 3, 2024

Honorable Chairman Morse and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of our 150,000 Sierra Club members and supporters in Michigan, we offer our support for two key programs that will dramatically improve the health of Michiganders and communities across our State.

1. Sierra Club urges the members of this committee to continue to prioritize water affordability program funding at \$60M* GF with boilerplate implementation language taken from [SB 549/HB 5088](#) to ensure alignment with the [Water Affordability Bill Package](#).

Why: Governor Whitmer led the entire nation when she issued our country's *only* water reconnection executive order in response to the pandemic in 2020. Governor Whitmer's actions were a powerful recognition of how important water access is to the health of every Michigander—when any Michigander loses access to safe running water, all Michiganders' health is put at risk. Although the pandemic has abated, water affordability struggles continue to plague Michiganders across our entire state. Since 2020, the honorable members of the State Legislature have recognized this need and appropriated general fund dollars to ensure Michiganders' access to water, with multiple rounds of funding provided to water assistance programs administered at the local level. These were incredibly important rounds of funding, but they do not present a long term solution. Thankfully, Senator Chang, Representative McKinney, and other legislative leaders have worked tirelessly to craft a long-term self-sustaining solution to water affordability—the Water Affordability Package. However, this bill package is still pending in both chambers. As you have heard from multiple utilities and service providers, funding to ensure continued access to water service to bridge the gap between now and when we get the Water Affordability Package to the Governor's desk is imperative to ensuring water access for our most vulnerable Michiganders. Access to water is the absolute bedrock of all public health protections, and we urge you to prioritize this request and work with your colleagues to get our long-term legislative solution across the finish line.

2. Sierra Club also urges the committee to \$100M to create a [whole home retrofit program](#) that will provide flexible funding to improve the quality, safety, and affordability of existing attainable and low-income housing. The funding should cover needed investments in low-income housing in the following areas: weatherization, minor home repair/safety upgrades/toxin remediation, energy-efficient electric appliances, and roof-top solar and residential battery backup systems.

Why: States are launching whole-home retrofit funds to provide comprehensive renovations for low- and moderate-income residents, enhancing home safety, energy efficiency, and resilience. This approach offers a "one-stop shop" solution that not only addresses immediate health and structural issues but also future-proofs homes against climate change and volatile energy costs. Right now contractors, community action agencies, and others must navigate a slew of different state programs in order to do repairs and improvements on one low-income Michigander's home or they are unable to do work like weatherization because minor home repair is needed first and there is no state funding for that. The whole-home program would solve both of these programs by creating one central location in state government for low-income housing investment and by allocating additional funding to fill existing funding gaps and better leverage federal weatherization dollars.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have any further questions.

Best Regards,
Christy McGillivray
Political and Legislative Director
Sierra Club Michigan

