Michigan Cattlemen's Association

"Serving Michigan's Cattlemen Since 1960"

February 15, 2011

House Agriculture Committee
c/o Representative Kevin Daley, Chairman
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Members of the House Agriculture Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Michigan Cattlemen's Association (MCA), I am writing to indicate our organization's support of House Bills 4212 - 4213.

Since its creation, the MI Cattlemen's Association has been a partner of the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). The legislation that is before you contains proactive environmental protection and defines MAEAP in state statute. In order to grow the program, we need your support.

It is important that the MI Department of Agriculture continue in their industry leadership role with clear standards approved by the Agriculture Commission and with adequate funding. The regulatory clarity that these bills provide is needed to operate and grow our farms. This legislation provides that certainty to farmers that are MAEAP verified.

MAEAP is a national model for proactive, voluntary environmental management on farms. This legislation ensures that the program will not just continue but grow. In fact, the goal is to increase the number of farms verified in the MAEAP program by 500% during the next four years.

But in order to reach this aggressive goal, we need to provide meaningful incentives for Michigan farmers to voluntarily and proactively become verified in MAEAP. This legislation will help in that effort by coordinating federal conservation program funding for Michigan farms and providing a level of consistency and certainty for environmental outcomes and economic investment. For every $1 the State of Michigan invests in MAEAP, there is $360 of investment by farmers and MAEAP partners to provide cleaner water and keep soil and nutrients in farm fields.

More MAEAP verified farms is a good thing for the environment, for farms and for our communities. Your support of House Bills 4212 and 4213 is critical to families throughout Michigan!

Sincerely,

Gary Sirley

President

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