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**House Committee on Health Policy  
Testimony**

**May 6, 2014**

**Ken Bowen, Michigan Association for Local Public Health**

Good afternoon, my name is Ken Bowen. I am the Health Officer for Ionia County Health Department and also a member of the Michigan Association for Local Public Health's Executive Committee. I would like to thank Chairwoman Haines and committee members for this opportunity to provide written testimony regarding HB 5200.

The Michigan Association for Local Public Health (MALPH) ***does not support*** HB 5200 as it is currently written.

MALPH does not support this bill for the following reasons:

- Currently, the Public Health Code gives Local Health Departments (LHDs) and subject matter experts therein broad discretion to determine what is and what is not a threat to public health. HB 5200 would impinge upon that discretion by implying that infestations are, by definition, a threat to public health.
- Expanding upon the first reason, the definitions of "infestation" and "pest" are too subjective. Under these definitions, nearly any number of any species of plant or animal could be determined to be a "pest infestation" depending upon the viewpoint of the individual.
- Expanding further, many pest complaints received by LHDs are the result of landlord-tenant or neighbor-neighbor disputes. Such disputes are rarely resolved quickly or easily, and often require a large investment of time and resources on the part of LHDs. The Bill as written would almost certainly increase the number of such complaints received by LHDs, and force LHDs to respond to complaints even if the conditions do not represent a true threat to public health. It should be noted that HB 5200 contains no funding for LHDs to alleviate the increase in time and resources spent responding to complaints.
- Finally, most (if not all) LHDs already respond to infestation complaints, including those involving bedbugs. This Bill would only serve to increase the amount of time and resources that LHDs must spend investigating added frivolous complaints.

In Summary, MALPH opposes HB 5200 as written because it is an unfunded mandate that lessens our discretion and authority under the Public Health Code, to attempt to solve a problem that many LHDs are already doing their best to solve with limited resources. We do welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with interested stakeholders to establish policies that protect the public's health in this regard.