



Michigan Forest Association

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To: Hon. Hugh D. Crawford, Chair, House Regulatory Reform Committee
From: William Botti, Executive Director, Michigan Forest Association
Subj: ***Forester Registration: oppose its repeal***

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the forestry-related bills under consideration today. We were surprised last evening to learn that you would be considering the repeal of forester registration today. There is much confusion and much that we don't understand about this process, but we want to reiterate our statements from last year.

More than half of Michigan's forests are in private ownership, thus, they represent an immense resource, both geographically and economically. As the state's only forest landowner association, we frequently receive requests for advice on managing these private forests. Many of our members have been approached by would-be buyers of timber, who promise much more than they intend to deliver in terms of management services. Sometimes they represent themselves as "foresters"; sometimes they tell the owners that there is no need to hire a forester, as they have many years' practical experience in logging and they know much more than the 'book-learning' that a forester would have. They usually skim the very best trees out of the woods and often leave a mess of ruts and broken trees. Such operators are an embarrassment to the industry – rather like the unscrupulous "used car salesman".

The term "registered forester" has provided a convenient way to describe the minimum qualifications needed in a trustworthy buyer or advisor. A registered forester must be a graduate of a 4-year degree program in forestry and must have at least 2 years of professional experience. Such a person could be a private consultant, a government employee, or an industry representative; in any case he or she possesses the minimum qualifications of education and experience and the desired reputation to merit our recommendation. What we hear from our members is that they need to know who they can trust; forester registration helps in that regard. We have heard that some members of the senate, who know quite a lot about forestry, have changed their stance on this and now favor keeping the forester registration.

We hope you will elect to retain *registered forester* in the occupational code and help our forest landowners get the quality assistance they are accustomed to and that they need to maintain the health and value of the resource that is under their control.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.


Executive Director