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TESTIMONY ON SB 397 AND 398
NEXT MI DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT IN THE U P
8/15/2013

Good morning Mr. Chair and Committee Members and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to your Economic Development Committee. My name is Scott Robbins, Director of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and Public Affairs for the Michigan Forest Products Council. I would like to offer brief comments regarding SB 397 and 398 which would create a Development District in the Central Upper Peninsula. The bill will be of great economic importance to the U P which is currently left out of the program. We support SB's 397 and 398.

Michigan's forest products industry adds $12 billion to the state's economy each year and contributes to the employment of more than 150,000 men and women. This industry is a pillar of Michigan's rural economy and is a key to diversification of the state's economic activity. Michigan and the U P in particular are in great need of incentives to economic development. We have recently through the Governors sponsored Forest Products Industry Summit pledged to increase the size of this ecominic impact by 20%. We have been working with you for the past few years to make MI a better state to do business in and this legislation brings the U P into the fold with the rest of the state. We need to do what we can to enhance current business in this region and attract new investment. This legislation will strengthen our ability to accomplish this vital objective.

We support all of the state and local efforts to maintain and attract new business to the U P and we believe this legislation and a U P Development District will go a long in helping to achieve our economic objectives. Thank you for your time this morning, and I will be happy to answer any questions.

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