

ST. CHARLES BORROMEIO CHURCH

1491 Baldwin Avenue
Detroit, MI 48214

Tuesday March 18, 2014

Dear Sen. Nofs and members of the Senate Energy & Technology Committee:

As the pastor of a Catholic parish in Detroit, I minister with many people who suffer the distresses of our city. From this vantage point, it can be challenging to act beyond the pressing issues of poverty and unemployment, which are right in front of our eyes every day.

What's sometimes harder to see, but no less pressing, are health issues like asthma. According to the Michigan Department of Community Health, the rate of asthma in Detroit is 50% higher than among the population of Michigan as a whole. And rates of hospitalization for asthma cases in our city are a whopping three times higher than in the rest of the state.

Michigan's heavy reliance on coal for energy is one leading cause of such high rates of asthma, as well as other heart and lung diseases. Detroit's heavy industry—including oil refineries and asphalt plants—is another key contributor.

For the health and wellbeing of all, but especially our most vulnerable, it is vital that we curb our dependence on fossil fuels and continue developing our capacity to generate wind and solar energy. This will not only help us realize a cleaner, healthier Michigan, it will also lower our state's pollution-related health costs, and spur new jobs and economic growth.

At St. Charles, we have sought to do our part by reducing our energy consumption and incorporating renewable technology. We have implemented energy efficiency measures in our church, bought Energy Star appliances when possible, and have installed a solar panel to heat the water at the rectory. In the summer, this solar panel cuts the rectory gas bill by 60%.

These modest steps are our way of loving God and living our faith. But the actions of individual churches are not enough to make our city a safe and healthy place for all. We need our lawmakers to take action. The energy efficiency and renewable portfolio standards mandated in 2008 put us on the right path. Now is the time to keep the momentum going by developing new and more aggressive standards.

Sincerely,



Rev. Raymond Stadmeyer, OFM Cap
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First Unitarian Universalist
CONGREGATION OF ANN ARBOR

Gail R. Geisenhainer, Senior Minister
Mark Evens, Associate Minister
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Thom Bales, Executive Director
Glen Thomas Riddleout, Director of Music
Kenneth W. Phifer, Minister Emeritus

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Dear Senate Energy & Technology Committee members and Senator Nof:

In November, the Michigan Public Service Commission's (MPSC) report on renewable energy found (RE) that utility companies are on track to reach the 10% renewable portfolio standard put into place in 2008. The report further found that Michigan has the capacity to increase RE generation to over 30% in the next 20 years.

I believe that Michigan can and should set ambitious goals for renewable energy standards. Our 7th Unitarian Universalist principle states that we affirm and promote "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." Increasing our use of clean energy is a way to care for all and honor our interdependence with the planet.

In order to meet the renewable portfolio standard (RPS) set by PA 295 in 2008, DTE initiated its Solar Currents program in 2009 (to purchase Renewable Energy Credits – RECs). The following year, our church installed solar panels and a small wind turbine on its grounds – and offset the cost in part by conveying its RECs to DTE's SC program. Through three years of operation, our on-site solar and wind have now saved the church over \$12,000 in electricity (up to 15% per year). Now, looking to the future, there is interest in the congregation in expanding these savings by adding LED lighting and additional solar generation.

Unlike fossil-fuel energy sources, the price of renewables continues to lower – increasing affordability. Since Michigan's RPS has been in place, the price of cost of wind energy has fallen to where it is now less expensive than coal. Our congregation is fortunate to have marshaled the resources to install renewable energy. We encourage stronger policies that will help more Michiganders to adopt the new technologies and to live in greater harmony with the Earth.

Our faith community tries to lead by example on energy issues; and we ask our lawmakers to do their part by creating policies that expand clean renewable energy production across the state. The utilities have proved they can rise to the challenge. We ask the same commitment from our political leaders. And we wish you well in all your deliberations.

Sincerely,

The Reverend Gail Ruth Geisenhainer, Senior Minister
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