

Testimony to Michigan Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Environment, and Great Lakes

Laura Robinson, President of Citizens for Oil-Free Backyards and resident of Scio Township

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Hello. I'm Laura Robinson, a resident of Scio Township, and I'm here on behalf of Citizens for Oil-Free Backyards, a grassroots nonprofit in Scio that supports maintaining quality of life and health, safety, and welfare for citizens in the face of oil and gas exploration and development in their neighborhoods. We oppose SB 1076 and SB 1026 as currently written. Thank you for hearing me this morning.

We are deeply grateful for the investment Senators Casperson, Brandenburg, Hune, and Warren and the rest of you have made over the past few months in beginning to address the issue of oil and gas exploration and development in residential neighborhoods and near our water sources—in our case the Huron River, which provides 85% of Ann Arbor's water supply. In Michigan water is our most precious resource. We need larger setbacks like DNR setbacks for rivers, and we also need them for residences. And wells should not be allowed in areas that are used, zoned, or planned for residential development.

We're glad you've acknowledged different population numbers in the newer revision of SB 1026. However, these bills do not go nearly far enough. The oil and gas industry is less regulated than any other industry, and townships—as do cities of any size—need to have the power to regulate drilling. Only five townships in the state are affected by legislation that addresses only townships with more than 70,000 people. This is unequal, unjust, and unfair to the majority of the state, including our township, which has a population of 16,000. Townships also need to retain the powers they do have, not give them away to the Supervisor of Wells as in the SB 1026 revision.

The overall policy should be a coherent strategy that gives power to all townships to make their own decisions, and that provides adequate protection for the citizens of our township and all others. We appreciate your continued work in making such a bill possible, and the citizens of Scio Township and those throughout the state look forward to supporting it when it is written. Thank you.