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Contact: Stephanie Cepak, Byrum & Fisk Advocacy Communications, scepak@byrumfisk.com

Diverse Stakeholders Urge Swift Passage of Legislation to Improve Siting of Renewable Energy Projects

Bills would streamline siting, supporting local communities and creating jobs

Lansing, MI – Environmental, labor, and business stakeholders, alongside rural landowners, today applauded the introduction of legislation to support local communities and create jobs by streamlining the siting of wind, solar, and energy storage projects. These projects provide significant tax revenue and a dependable source of income for landowners, enabling communities to provide services for their residents and ensuring that farmland remains in farming families for generations to come. Unfortunately, outside opposition groups have succeeded in taking these opportunities away from communities across the state, using fear tactics and misinformation to block renewable energy projects at the local level.

"Our farmland has been in the family for over 150 years. Hosting a solar project on part of that land is a life-changing opportunity that would help us keep our farm in the family," said **Clara Ostrander, a Monroe County landowner**. "Unfortunately, that opportunity could be lost at the last minute because of a broken township permitting process. We are thankful that Governor Whitmer and our legislators are working to fix this problem and are standing up for the property rights of farm families across Michigan."

The legislation introduced today, House Bills 5120-5123, would create an option to allow the experts at the Michigan Public Service Commission the authority to permit large utility-scale wind, solar, and energy storage projects (greater than 50 or 100 megawatts in capacity). Decisions regarding smaller projects would remain fully in the purview of local officials. This hybrid approach will allow larger projects, which have a statewide need, to move forward while ensuring that local voices are heard.

"It is well past time for the Michigan Legislature to tackle this critical issue," said **Terry Anderson, a former township supervisor from Douglass Township in Montcalm County**. "When a wind project was proposed in our area, it became clear immediately that forces from outside our community were fanning the flames of opposition, leading to fights among neighbors and harassment of longtime public servants. I'm normally a fierce advocate for local control, when it makes sense, but in my experience, the permitting of large energy infrastructure projects, like wind and solar farms, belong in the hands of experts at the state level. If the state wants to set significant renewable energy goals, the state should take on the burden of reviewing and approving these projects."

"My family has farmed our land for generations, but it's gotten harder and harder due to crop market volatility and unpredictable weather. We've seen what hosting a solar project can do for other farmers, providing steady income and keeping family farms going," said **Mike Fejes, a Genesee County landowner**. "Unfortunately, our local elected officials have decided that we can't make decisions about our own property and that we're not able right now to support our farm



with a solar project. The legislature needs to pass these bills to protect our livelihood and the private property rights of small family farms.

In addition to local tax revenue and landowner payments, utility-scale renewable projects also create hundreds of well-paying jobs in the construction industry. By requiring projects to follow strict labor, environmental, and community engagement standards, this legislation raises the bar for project development across the state, ensuring maximum benefits are delivered to host communities and workers.

"Large renewable energy projects, like wind, solar, and battery storage, demand a highly-skilled, highly-trained workforce," said **Ryan Husse, Business Manager of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 252**. "Our members are prepared to build Michigan's clean energy future, and this legislation will pave the way for our state's energy transition, all while ensuring that we are creating good-paying, family-supporting union jobs in Michigan."

"Carpenters and Millwrights have retooled our apprenticeships and the training of all of our members to meet the demands of a clean-energy future. The solar, wind, and battery storage projects enabled by this legislation will create the kinds of jobs you can support a family on and will secure a cleaner, more prosperous future for Michigan families and the union workforce that will build it," said **Mike Barnwell, President of the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights**.

"At Ventower, which is owned and operated in Monroe, Michigan, we fabricate the tall towers for wind turbines and have employed many Michiganders over the years," said **Scott Viciano, Vice President of Sales and Business Development for Ventower Industries**. "Passage of legislation to improve the siting of renewable energy projects in Michigan will allow us to produce more of these towers right here, creating additional jobs and supporting the local economy."

"Michigan leads the Midwest in clean energy jobs with nearly 124,000 people currently employed in the clean energy industry," said **Dr. Laura Sherman, President of the Michigan Energy Innovation Business Council**. "It is critical that we continue to grow these good-paying jobs by setting supportive state-level policies."

"By streamlining the siting process for clean energy projects and ensuring processes for equitable community consultation and benefits agreements, Michigan can capitalize on millions of dollars in federal funds," said **Courtney Bourgojn, Evergreen Action Midwest senior policy and advocacy manager**. "More clean energy development will boost economies across the state—from rural communities to areas that have faced historic disinvestment. This legislation will directly increase the number of good paying jobs and help lower energy costs. Let's get it done."

"Businesses across Michigan are making powerful sustainability goals including powering their operations with renewable energy," said **Daniel Schoonmaker, Executive Director of the Michigan Sustainable Business Forum**. "For these companies to meet their goals and for the state to tackle climate change, it is essential that we ensure that supportive landowners can host solar and wind projects."



It is critical that the Michigan Legislature moves expeditiously to pass these bills this fall to improve the siting of renewable energy projects – guaranteeing continued benefits for local communities and landowners, and ensuring job growth in the clean energy industry.

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