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Michigan Senate Energy and Environment Committee

Subject: Testimony on SB 271, SB 273, and SB 502

Chair McCann and Members of the Michigan Senate Energy and Environment Committee,

I am writing to you on behalf of Audubon Great Lakes, a regional arm of the National Audubon Society, to express our strong support for a 100 percent carbon-free electricity standard. Founded in 1905, National Audubon Society is dedicated to the conservation and protection of birds and their habitats. Audubon represents nearly two million supporters nationwide, including more than 45,000 Michiganders. Together, we believe that SB 271, SB 273, and SB 502 will set the state on a strong path towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions to benefit Michigan's economy and birds.

Birds are telling us that the time to take climate action is now. North America has lost more than three billion birds over the past half-century, and [two-thirds](#) of North American bird species at risk of extinction due to climate change. To avoid the worst impacts of climate change for birds and people, we must reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. We can only achieve this imperative by implementing policies that reduce carbon emissions and support the growth of renewable energy.

Setting a 100% carbon-free goal will provide a clear roadmap for how Michigan can move to a clean energy future and sets a timeline at the speed needed to address the threat of climate change. By accelerating the deployment of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, this legislation will help lessen the impacts of climate change to protect our state's unique biodiversity.

Hundreds of bird species rely on Michigan's natural resources to thrive, including beloved birds like the Kirtland's Warbler, and Great Lakes Piping Plover. Unfortunately, these species – and many more – are already facing significant challenges from habitat loss, changing weather patterns and other climate-related impacts. One species, the Black Tern, faces population declines up to 99 percent over the past 54 years as storm events and rising water levels caused by climate change threaten their nesting grounds.

Renewable energy projects must be responsibly sited to avoid and minimize impacts to birds and their habitat. By strategically locating renewable energy facilities in areas that minimize impacts on sensitive ecosystems and by conducting thorough

environmental assessments, we can ensure that renewable energy and conservation efforts go hand in hand.

The renewable energy sector holds significant economic potential for Michigan. This year, a report from [Clean Jobs Midwest found](#) Michigan leads the Midwest states in clean energy jobs with nearly 124,000 Michiganders employed by clean energy companies at the end of 2022. The industry grew by nearly 5 percent over the past year, adding more than 5,000 jobs. More renewable energy projects in Michigan will stimulate job growth, attract investments and foster innovation in clean technologies.

These policies should allocate at least 10 percent of the renewable energy generation projects to communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution.

Energy waste reduction is an important part of the state addressing climate change. Legislation that addresses energy waste reduction should prioritize communities that are marginalized, underserved and overburdened by pollution while increasing energy efficiency requirements to ensure electrical and gas providers reduce their energy use while lowering costs for consumers, and invest in weatherizing homes and business to reduce emissions.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) needs the ability to regulate utilities for equity, health, affordability, and climate impacts while prioritizing communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. AGL supports policies that empower this type of oversight.

Audubon Great Lakes thanks the Michigan Senate Energy Committee for recognizing the urgency of addressing climate change and taking steps to move to a renewable energy future. We strongly encourage you to support policies that demonstrate Michigan's commitment to environmental stewardship, economic prosperity and the well-being of Michigan's birds and people.

If you require further information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Adam Forrer  
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Audubon Great Lakes