

April 16, 2009

The Honorable Representative Joel Sheltrown  
S 1387 House Office Building  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

The Honorable Representative Brian N. Calley  
N 1191 House Office Building  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Sirs,

The Michigan Recreation and Park Association (MRPA) represents nearly 2,000 professionals dedicated to creating community through people, parks, and programs in cities, villages, townships and counties across Michigan. We advocate for public policies that protect and conserve natural resources and improve public access to park lands and outdoor recreation.

As Executive Director of MRPA, I write to inform you that the MRPA Board of Directors has adopted a resolution opposing HJR H and House Bill 4204 which you have sponsored. The joint resolution and bill would amend the Michigan Constitution and associated implementing law to change both the percentage of annual revenue that could be spent from the MNRTF, and the purposes for that spending.

MRPA members are the primary beneficiaries of matching grants from the MNRTF to acquire new park lands, and to develop recreational facilities at the local community level. As you know, of the 1/3 of yearly revenues that are presently available for spending, approximately 75% are spent on buying land or rights in land and 25% are used to develop recreational facilities. MRPA has been part of the growing discussion about increasing the percentage of spending on the development of outdoor recreation facilities, and decreasing the percentage spent on acquiring new lands and rights in land. We welcome discussion that may lead to more investment in developing existing parks and recreation facilities – taking care of what we have – with a concomitant decrease in new acquisitions.

Our opposition stems primarily from what we perceive to be a diversion of scarce MNRTF resources to develop and operate state grounds and facilities that are supposed to be funded from the Game and Fish Fund – essentially robbing Peter to pay Paul. Unfortunately, MRPA's local members are "Peters" in this funding shift, and the intended "Pauls" are state programs that already have their own dedicated source of funding. Moreover, MNRTF funds have never been used for day-to-day operations or maintenance given the core mission of the MNRTF to replace non-renewable resources with permanent, renewable resources. We support this core mission.

We recognize the shortage of resources for the purposes you intend, and we are willing to work with you to identify alternatives. However, we cannot support HJR H or HB 4204 in their present formulation.

Sincerely,

Dennis L. Schornack