

Issue Brief



Statewide Septic Code

Background

There is a consensus among local public health officials, septic tank installers, environmentalists and septage haulers that something should be done to protect Michigan's fresh water and prevent a public health crisis from human waste contamination. How to do it has been greatly contested.

Legislation has been introduced to mandate every septic tank be inspected every five years. This proposal is concerning. First, costs for local public health departments would be immense and the staff and resources needed simply do not exist at this time. Second, there is not enough infrastructure to manage this amount of waste. Third, homeowners would need to pay for the inspections and any necessary repairs. Lastly, the introduced proposal eliminates a county's ability to administer a point-of-sale program; 11 counties currently operate such programs and several more are exploring one.



MAC's Efforts

MAC is opposed to the regular inspection cycle and repeal of point-of-sale ordinances. MAC has participated in several workgroups with the bill sponsors, representatives from the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, environmental experts, Realtors and professionals from the septic industry. A new version of the bill began circulating in late summer but has not been made widely available to stakeholders or the Legislature.

MAC anticipates additional workgroup meetings this fall. As the bill draft evolves, we will continue to advocate for local control and financial support for both health departments and residents. Allowing counties to decide what is right for them is of the utmost importance, and if a county wants to enact a point-of-sale program they should be free to do so.

These requirements will force procedural, structural and philosophical changes within courts and counties.

Message to Lawmakers

- Local public health departments do not have the staff or funds to administer the program as proposed.
- There are not enough water treatment facilities in the state to accept this much septage.
- Many counties already successfully operate a point-of-sale program and should be permitted to continue doing so.
- This program will financially devastate families across Michigan.