



Issue Brief

MICHIGAN COUNTIES

LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

Lansing Center | DoubleTree Hotel | April 29 - May 1, 2024

Statewide Sanitary 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. While experts agree that change is needed, the approach has been greatly contested.

Legislation has been introduced to mandate that every septic tank in the state be inspected every five years. This proposal is concerning for several reasons. First, the cost for local public health departments to administer this program 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, which can be incredibly difficult for many families in Michigan. Lastly, the introduced proposal eliminates a county's ability to administer a point-of-sale program; eleven counties currently operate such programs and several more are exploring implementing one.

MAC's Efforts

MAC is opposed to the regular inspection cycle, as well as the 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. It seems likely a statewide sanitary code of some kind will be adopted in this legislative term, so we are working hard 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 must septage.
- Many counties are already successfully operating a point-of-sale program and should be permitted to continue doing so.
- This program will financially devastate families across Michigan.