ALLIANCE FOR THE GREAT LAKES

June 11, 2012

The Honorable Frank Foster, Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation
307 House Office Building
Lansing, MI 48909

RE: House Bill 5647

Dear Chairman Foster, Minority Vice-Chair Haugh and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written comments on House Bill 5647 (HB 5647). We appreciate the Michigan House's response to our natural resources but HB 5647 is unnecessary and troublesome for Michigan's unique Great Lakes dunes.

The Alliance for the Great Lakes has a long history of work protecting Michigan's beaches and natural coastal areas, including the dunes, through our Adopt-A-Beach™ program. We also played a lead role in reducing mining of coastal sand dunes while raising awareness of this issue, and have served on previous state committees charged with reviewing Michigan policy on development in sand dunes. Every year, thousands of Alliance volunteers work to help maintain the vast beauty of Michigan's beaches and dunes – a key tourist attraction and economic engine for the Great Lakes state.

Michigan's 80,000 acres of Critical Dune Areas are the highest and most spectacular dunes in the Great Lakes region, rimming Lake Michigan and parts of Lake Superior. Like Senate Bill 1130, HB 5647 weakens the law which governs permitting for proposed developments of Critical Dune Areas. Among other changes, it prohibits home rule by preventing local governments from requiring environmental impact statements and developing more stringent local zoning ordinances that protect critical dune areas. The bill also removes the prohibition on permitting uses which are not in the public interest. Coastal communities depend on Michigan's unique dunes to power local economies, and it is wholly appropriate that they be empowered to zone to ensure these assets are protected.

17 N. State Street • Suite 1390 • Chicago, Illinois 60602 • (312) 939-0838 • alliance@greatlakes.org • www.greatlakes.org

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For these reasons, we ask that you vote no on HB 5647. Once again, allow me to extend my sincere thanks for your deliberations on this matter. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me at (312) 939-0838 x 232, or at jteutsch@greatlakes.org.

Sincerely,

Joel Brammeier
President & CEO

Jared Teutsch
Water Policy Advocate