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**Michigan House Bill 4961**

**June 1, 2010**

Chairman Gilbert, Members of the Michigan Transportation Committee, I am writing in support of House Bill 4961 which would allow Michigan to enter into a public-private agreement and further allow them to begin construction on the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) between the United States and Canada.

The importance of Canada's relationship with the US and nearly every state including Ohio is critical. One can speak of culture or tourism or the value of a friendly border neighbor, but the real driver of the relationship is commerce and trade. Canada is the largest foreign trade partner for the United States. In addition, Canada is Ohio's top export markets with bilateral trade amounting to \$35.8 billion for 2008. An estimated 267,500 jobs in Ohio are supported by United States-Canada Trade and Canadians made more than 605,300 visits to Ohio during 2008 spending more that \$138 million.

A critical tool in this Ohio/ Canadian trade exchange is the international boarder crossing at Detroit/Windsor. Between the existing tunnel and the Ambassador Bridge, this crossing is the busiest international border crossing in the world. The present bridge was built in 1929 and in recent years has been a point of delay especially for trucks crossing the bridge. These delays have curtailed commerce and have made goods on both sides of the border less attractive to companies of the other side.

Approximately 54% of United States-Canada trade moves by truck and about half of the truck use the Detroit and Port Huron Border Crossings. These statistics not only show the important trade relationship between Ohio and Canada, but also the importance of the new Detroit River International Crossing.

The Ohio Senate recently passed Senate Resolution 223 to support the construction of the new Detroit River International Crossing between the United States and Canada.

As the resolution states, "Plans are underway to build an additional border crossing system over the Detroit River, known as the Detroit River International Crossing." Since the State of Michigan needs legislative authority to enter into a public-private partnership and enter into an agreement with Canada to build this border crossing, Senate Resolution 223 urges the Michigan Legislature to act swiftly to authorize the DRIC and assure that the United States can continue to efficiently and safely move people and goods across our border.

As a member of the US-Canada Relations Committee for Midwest CSG, I have had the opportunity over the past several months to travel to several regions of Canada and discuss new ways for leaders in the Midwest states and Canada to join together to create jobs, attract business investment and grow our local economies. Construction of the DRIC is critical to this effort.

Thank you for allowing me to offer proponent testimony for Michigan House Bill 4961.

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