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Michigan Corn Farmers Disappointed in Governor's Executive Order

LANSING, MICH. – The Michigan Corn Growers Association (MCGA) is calling on the Legislature to overturn an Executive Order that could destroy the transparency, accountability and citizen involvement of the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA).

Executive Order 2009-45 eliminates the current authority of the bi-partisan Commission of Agriculture to oversee MDA and select and manage the director of the department. The MDA director would gain sole oversight of the department and become an appointee of the Governor. Under the order, ultimate decisions, including revisions to Generally Accepted Agriculture Management Practices for Michigan's Right to Farm Act, would be made solely by the director without input from citizens. The Commission of Agriculture's role would be limited to simply providing a forum for gathering information instead of making the well-thought out decisions and policies they do today.

“As a result of an enormous agricultural outreach to Lansing, Michigan's farmers were able to prevent MDA from being a part of the department merger. However, this good news was short-lived because the new Executive Order strips stakeholders in Michigan agriculture from having a voice in the workings of MDA,” said Tom Durand, MCGA president and a corn grower from Croswell.

Replacing the open style of the Ag Commission with a closed, behind-doors approach denies the people of Michigan the transparency and accountability they deserve. The move also strips agricultural stakeholders of their ability to be directly involved in the management of the state's diverse and complex agriculture department. Functional oversight of the MDA, its director and decisions on vital programs affecting the state's agriculture industry best belong to a citizen-based commission—not a bureaucracy.

For years, the commission has worked in close partnership with agriculture and other sectors, including the Department of Agriculture, to build strong policies supportive of forward-looking agricultural practices and opportunities. This function helped strengthen ties between the agricultural sector and government, leading to successful commonsense policies, new jobs and opportunities, and consistent growth in recent years. Without this function, the public loses a critical accountability measure that keeps track of many areas within agriculture, from keeping programs that work and weeding out those that do not to funding issues.

“Agriculture is one of the few bright spots in Michigan's struggling economy,” added Durand “The order from the Governor will not save our state any money nor will it improve the efficiency of state government. All it will do is put Michigan's second leading industry and our economy at risk.”

Headquartered in Lansing, the MCGA is a grassroots-membership association representing the state's corn farmers' political interests. Since the 1970s, the MCGA has been looking out for the state's corn farmers and working to keep them on the cutting edge. The MCGA works cooperatively with the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) a legislatively-established program that utilizes one-cent per bushel of Michigan corn sold and invests in research, education, new uses and market development. For more information, visit the website of the MCGA and the CMPM at www.micorn.org.

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