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CONTACT:

Mary ZumBrunnen  
(517) 353-9555  
[zumbrun1@msu.edu](mailto:zumbrun1@msu.edu)

1615 E. Michigan Avenue, Lansing, MI 48912

October 10, 2025

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Academia and Industry Partner Testify on the Importance of Circular Economics at Michigan’s Capitol**

**LANSING, MI** — On the first day of the federal government’s shutdown, academic partners from Michigan State University’s (MSU) Center for Community & Economic Development (CCED) along with industry partners from Whirlpool Corporation testified at the “People’s House” beginning at noon in front of the Michigan House of Representative’s Natural Resources and Tourism Committee on the critical importance of circular economics. Dr. Rex LaMore, Director of the Center spoke alongside Whirlpool’s Enterprise Sustainability Manager on the importance of making the shift to circularity as a critical step for jobs creation, new market development and environmental stewardship saying, “the linear paradigm – where materials are extracted, used in production, sold to consumers and eventually thrown away – is an unsustainable material flow that places considerable stress on our environment and threatens our long term growth and sustainability.”

In times of economic uncertainty, many are urging for movement from current “take, make, waste” traditional economic extractive practices to those of a more regenerative nature. Circular practices embrace a paradigm shift where material waste is designed out from product lifecycles from the very beginning creating both new markets and jobs as well as relieving crippling pressures on landfills. Rising costs of raw materials, vulnerable supply chains and achievement of cost reduction in material waste can also be supportive of new business and industry development in secondary/end markets when designed for circularity from inception. House Natural Resources and Tourism Committee Chair, Representative Martin said, “We’ve talked about the circular economy before, and I just want to get it out there and get a deep dive.”

“The major home appliance industry has a very high rate of landfill diversion, largely driven by the large proportion of recyclable materials in our products," said Samantha Truesdell, Whirlpool Corporation sustainability manager. "That being said, we strive for continuous improvement from an environmental sustainability lens, but also because we believe that the effective handling of products at the end of their useful life represents an opportunity for a positive final touch point with our consumers." Whirlpool Corporation, the only major U.S.-based manufacturer of kitchen and laundry appliances, is located in Benton Harbor, Mich.

It is estimated that Michigan will dispose of between $6.2 billion to $8.3 billion in marketable material through its municipal solid waste stream by 2035 according to the Michigan Sustainable Business Forum’s (MSBF) 2024 *Economic Impact Potential and Characterization of Municipal Solid Waste in Michigan* report. Those materials that make it to municipal trash have an estimated market value of between $500 million to $676 million. Without new business practices, policy and infrastructure, the state could annually lose an estimated half a billion dollars of potential feedstock for its manufacturers, farms and other end markets. This could also create another 4,500 jobs as reported by the MSBF.

Attending the presentation, students from MSU also sat in the public gallery demonstrating their support. “As a student at MSU, I am deeply committed to shaping a future that works for all, including the broader state of Michigan. It’s becoming increasingly clear that developing a circular economic model is the first, and perhaps most important, step in protecting our collective future,” said Social Relations and Policy major, Olivia Schaefer, who also coordinates the MSU Sunrise Movement.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic the Center first began to build a circular economic faculty network (now composed of more than 70 scholars and partners) as part of an economic resiliency grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration in 2020. Today, members include entities such as the College of Engineering, School of Packaging, AgBioResearch, College of Natural Science, College of Agriculture, School of Planning, Design and Construction and more than 60 others on and off campus who focus on resiliency by conducting cutting edge research, offering education, outreach and opportunities for student and community involvement. Jointly, they recognize that circular economics also affects many social determinants of health including reducing health risks to workers and consumers and also by reducing regulatory health and safety costs.

“I am also committed to raising awareness of environmental topics,” said Giovanni Rodrigues, president of the Eli Broad Business College’s International Student Council and a Supply Chain major at MSU. Originally from the Amazon region in Brazil, he said, “I am eager to generate impact by contributing to creative solutions for carbon emissions and reducing global heat.”

“A circular economy requires forethought and supportive integration to achieve the level of collaboration necessary to maximize salvage and reuse. On the global stage this new conception of material use is gaining traction with consumers, industry and policy makers,” said Dr. LaMore. Ultimately, the future of the state of Michigan’s circular economy could be in the hands of legislators. The Center and industry partners left the House Natural Resources and Tourism Committee with recommendations to legislatures leading the way, including: incentivizing circular industry processes and products through targeted economic development partnerships; supporting workforce development in circular sectors, supporting circularity in state government operations and purchasing; supporting product extended producer initiatives by industry and communities, and; supporting circular material research, outreach and instruction at research institutions and universities.



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