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Testimony of the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO Regarding Michigan's PA 4 Before the House Judiciary Committee February 21, 2012

Thank you for your time Mr. Chair. My name is Chris Michalakis, and I am the Secretary-Treasurer of the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO. We represent over 200,000 working family in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties who work in a very wide variety of industries in the public and private sectors.

Michigan's Public Act 4, also known as the "Emergency Manager Law" is a president-breaking attack on democracy at the local level as well as an attack on democracy at the workplace. Consider some of the provisions in this dangerous law:

- Emergency managers answer only to the state Treasurer, an appointed position, not to any of the constituents they represent.
- Emergency managers have the power to merge entire cities and counties without any input from its citizens
- Emergency managers can suspend, alter, or eliminate collective bargaining agreements without any input from the union membership, or the local communities.
- Emergency managers can layoff and privatize any public employee without any checks and balances from any elected officials.

Mr. Chair, as I talk to members of the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO, they tell me that this law is NOT about helping schools and local communities, but that this law is a blatant power grab that threatens our democracy! This is a law about taking away people's voting rights, and worker's collective bargaining rights!

Mr. Chair, over 200,000 voters in the state of Michigan have signed a petition saying that they want to challenge this law in November. I ask everyone in this room to send a message to representatives in Lansing to not take away our ability to vote on this issue through a ballot referendum.

When communities are suffering, we should be working together to find solutions to help each other through these hard times, NOT kicking them while they are down.

Thank you for your time Mr. Chair.