



Representative Neylon
Chair, Assembly Committee on Jobs and the Economy
412 East
State Capitol
August 3, 2017

RE: AB1, August 2017 Special Session

Representative Neylon and members of the Committee on Jobs and the Economy,

Thank you for offering the public a forum to discuss concerns about the package of financial and regulatory changes offered to Foxconn to develop facilities in southeastern Wisconsin.

The River Alliance of Wisconsin is a nonprofit water protection organization. Our members come from all corners of the state; anglers and small business owners, working families and students, property owners and academics. We protect drinking water, restore stream banks, hunt down aquatic invasive species, help shape sound public policy, and ensure Wisconsin waters are clean and available to all. We are united in the belief that the economic vitality of Wisconsin is very much dependent on the quality of life that clean, abundant water affords our state.

Assembly Bill 1 is highly questionable economic policy in part *because* it includes terrible environmental policy. This bad bill sets a dangerous precedent for Wisconsin communities that do not view a healthy economy and healthy environment as an either-or. Much has been made of the dizzying array of proposed tax giveaways totaling up to \$3 Billion -- 50 times as much as the state has ever provided for an economic development project. But these funds are only part of the equation-- exemptions to environmental laws would be sweeping for the company, and we haven't even been told yet a specific geographic location where we would be applying these exemptions. Notably, there are no specific number of jobs guaranteed within this bill, but there are *very* specific environmental protections that will be eliminated as a condition of Foxconn's investment in Wisconsin.

We urge the Assembly to reject AB 1, which will:

- Let Foxconn discharge dredged materials or fill Wisconsin wetlands without a permit. The provision would apply not only to wetlands Foxconn fills when it's constructing its 1.6 square mile complex, but also to wetlands it fills once its new facility is fully operational.
- Exempt Foxconn from another state law that requires businesses to create new wetlands when they get permits to fill existing ones.
- Allow Foxconn to change the course of a stream, or straighten a stream without a permit.

- Let Foxconn build on a lake or stream bed without a permit.
- Sidestep a state law that requires environmental impact statements before businesses can begin construction.
- Let public utility projects begin for the Foxconn complex without approval by the Public Service Commission.

Governor Walker, Foxconn and the bill's authors are, in effect, presenting Wisconsin workers with a cynical choice: a job or clean water for your community. That feels a lot more like a threat than the opportunity this kind of economic development should represent. And it's a threat that sets a dangerous precedent for economic development in the future. Will Wisconsin taxpayers soon be told that any company with plans to grow in Wisconsin can expect to bear little or no responsibility for ensuring the health of local communities? Will existing companies soon have rights to disregard long-standing environmental protections too?

We believe there is a different approach that capitalizes on the state's natural assets, including its water resources, instead of degrading them. In fact, we believe that protecting our water resources is central to our prosperity as a state, region and nation.

The proposed Foxconn site will likely be somewhere in the Great Lakes basin and thus impact the largest freshwater system on the planet. Businesses throughout southeastern Wisconsin recognize the opportunity the Great Lakes offer and have created one of the most vibrant and influential cluster of water-based businesses in the world through the Water Council. The impact of the work done to promote the region as a freshwater center in the world is threatened by the prospect of local water resources that are tainted because of lax or non-existent environmental oversight of the Foxconn development. We recognize the urgency of attracting employers to Wisconsin. But we should not sacrifice responsible due diligence and our history of conservation in pursuit of investment.

The River Alliance of Wisconsin cannot support AB 1 given the enormous risk it presents to Wisconsin communities. We cannot afford to sacrifice clean water as a condition of jobs that are far from guaranteed.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raj Shukla", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Raj Shukla
Executive Director, River Alliance of Wisconsin