Re: Support for House Bill 5031 – Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti SmartZone Extension

Dear Members of the Michigan House of Representatives,

My name is Max Morefield, and I am the Founder and CEO of KISS, a Michigan-based digital health technology startup headquartered in Ann Arbor. I am also an active client of Ann Arbor SPARK and an MBA student at Eastern Michigan University. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 5031 and the extension of the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti SmartZone.

As an early-stage founder building a health technology platform in Michigan, the resources provided through Ann Arbor SPARK have been directly tied to our ability to develop, test, and scale our product within this state. Through SPARK, KISS has participated in funding readiness programming, received one-on-one mentorship, engaged in strategic planning sessions, accessed investor and pitch opportunities, and connected with a statewide network of founders, operators, and capital providers. These programs have materially accelerated our progress and reduced the barriers that typically force startups to relocate to larger coastal markets.

The SmartZone is not an abstract economic development tool. It is operational infrastructure that enables startups to move from prototype to commercialization. For companies like mine, which operate in digital health and data-driven technology, early access to mentorship, capital pathways, and ecosystem connectivity determines whether we can build and hire in Michigan or whether we must leave to survive.

HB 5031 represents a continuation of a proven innovation pipeline that retains highly skilled talent in Michigan, supports commercialization of university-linked and founder-led technologies, de-risks early-stage companies and attracts private investment, creates high-wage, knowledge-based jobs, and strengthens regional collaboration between universities, startups, and industry.

My own journey reflects that pipeline. As an EMU MBA student and founder, I am building KISS within Michigan's higher education and startup ecosystem. The existence of the SmartZone and Ann Arbor SPARK is a primary reason our company is scaling here rather than relocating to another state.

The return on investment is long-term and compounding. Startups supported through this ecosystem hire locally, contract with Michigan service providers, collaborate with research institutions, and contribute to the state's tax base as they grow. Sustaining this infrastructure ensures that Michigan remains competitive in attracting and retaining technology companies.

On behalf of KISS and the broader founder community that relies on these programs, I respectfully urge you to support House Bill 5031 and the continued operation of the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti SmartZone.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to Michigan's innovation economy.

Sincerely,

Max Morefield
Founder & CEO, KISS
Ann Arbor, Michigan