February 16, 2026

The Honorable Chair Representative Mike Hoadley, and
Members of the House Committee on Economic Competitiveness
Michigan House of Representatives
P.O. Box 30014 Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Representative Hoadley,

I am writing in support of House Bill 5031, sponsored by Representative Ron Robinson. This bill would allow regional local development finance authorities that oversee SmartZones to establish a one-time 15-year extension to the existing tax capture — a straightforward measure that would strengthen Michigan's ability to grow competitive businesses.

I lead Start Garden in Grand Rapids, an organization that has served entrepreneurs since 2012. We exist to be the first stop on a founder's journey — a transformative step into a new venture and a new life. Founders who walked through our doors with only an idea have gone on to sell companies for hundreds of millions of dollars and create more than a thousand jobs.

In their first years, though, these founders didn't look any different from anyone else. Their companies rose and fell in ways too small for traditional economic development to notice, but were massive storm swells to the founders and their families. Our organization was their home, in a quite literal way, during those early days.

Organizations like Start Garden exist in every city. We call ourselves Ecosystem Builders because our work is to maintain the conditions of a highly connected and supportive community for new entrepreneurs — to catch them at the beginning and connect them to their first team, first investors, and first customers, so we keep them in our communities.

My Ecosystem Builder colleagues around the country envy Michigan's SmartZones, and the foresight of our state to ensure the lights stay on and doors stay open for when an aspiring entrepreneur takes their shot. SmartZones are an essential piece of the puzzle that brings daily value to new business owners in our communities.

Sincerely,



Paul Moore Executive Director, Start Garden

START GARDEN

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