Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Abbie Tykocki, and I serve as Chair of the Lansing Local Development Finance Authority SmartZone Board. I'm here in strong support of House Bill 5031.

HB 5031 does not create a new program or access additional state funds. It simply allows a 15-year extension of an existing tax capture. In doing so, it protects and strengthens a proven, measurable technology investment and job-creation tool that Michigan already uses successfully. That extended planning horizon matters. Technology development operates on long timelines, and stability is essential for companies and investors making long-term commitments that lead to sustained job growth.

In East Lansing, our SmartZone has supported hundreds of startup and early-stage technology companies, many spun out of research at Michigan State University. In the past year alone, we helped launch 16 new companies that raised $18 million in private and public investment and created 52 new jobs. Our Technology & Innovation Center coworking space is at 100% occupancy. These companies are generating high-skill jobs and contributing to the revitalization of our downtown.

The impact is tangible. Companies like VERN AI, Loopy Products, and BRCE began with an idea and our support system. Today, they are bringing innovative products to market, from emotionally responsive AI that combats banking fraud to sustainably manufactured consumer goods upcycled from agricultural waste and the world's first shoelaces that do not come untied. These success stories demonstrate how pairing entrepreneurial vision with SmartZone resources accelerates growth and strengthens our regional economy.

Beyond startups, we are building the future workforce. We've delivered coding camps to more than 200 K-12 students. We're supporting Impression 5 Science Center as they build out a new Teen Technology Hub. Last year, we supported 17 teen entrepreneurs, most from underserved populations, helping them turn ideas into viable businesses.

HB 5031 also includes important safeguards: clear statutory definitions, public-benefit requirements, and continued accountability and transparency. It allows communities like East Lansing to deliver results responsibly while keeping Michigan competitive with neighboring states that are aggressively investing in tech-based economic development.

The SmartZone program is working. This bill ensures it can continue to drive innovation, retain talent, and create high-quality jobs in Michigan.

I respectfully urge your support of House Bill 5031. Thank you for your time and consideration.