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To: Michigan House of Representative Economic Development and Small Business Committee
Representative John Hoskins, Chair
Representative Kristian Grant, Majority Vice Chair
Representative Mark Tisdell, Minority Vice Chair
CC: All other Members of the House Economic Development and Small Business Committee

From: Change at the Edges, LLC
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Hearing Date: April 30, 2024
Date: 9:00 a.m. EDT
Place: Room 326, House Office Building, Lansing, MI

Michigan House Bill 5463 – Letter of Support

Microenterprises represent more than 80 percent of small businesses in Michigan. In the first quarter of 2023, businesses with less than 10 employees employed 437,033 Michigan residents, while companies of 500 and more employed 1,317,223 (Michigan Labor Market Information released by the Michigan Department of Technology Management and Budget).

Looking at the numbers, one might assume the lion's share of resources should be allocated to support large corporations, but as with all things, a successful and sustainable economic development strategy relies on balance – supporting large, growing, and small/micro businesses with equal focus.

When you're small, it's easy to get lost in the shuffle. House Bill 5463 will provide a dedicated voice inside state government, ensuring microenterprises receive the support they need to start, achieve sustainability, and grow.

My time at the Edward Lowe Foundation showed me the importance of growth companies and how essential they are to our economy. But every growth company has a story about starting. Take Amway for example. Founded in 1959, Jay Van Andel and Rich DeVos believed owning a business could help you reach your full potential and provide a better life for you and your family. They were right. And in turn, they paid it forward with significant philanthropy, making a difference for thousands inside and outside of Michigan. That's entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship also lifts up communities. When community members see an entrepreneur who looks and feels like them succeed, it gives them hope. But it's hard to be a beacon of hope if you can't get started or move forward. A dedicated office and liaison for microenterprises will affect policy, address and remove barriers, and provide a much-needed advocate for individuals brave enough to take that first step towards business ownership. Resulting data collection will be the basis for compelling stories and measurement. And government set asides will provide capital for continued growth.

Small businesses are the fabric of our economies. They provide employment, generate income, and become community examples. Please support this measure and provide potential and existing entrepreneurs a pathway to build on their dreams, lower inequality, generate wealth and become change agents inside their communities.

Thank you!

Penny Lewandowski