February 19, 2021

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
State of Michigan
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

**Re: Returning to the Office**

Dear Governor Whitmer:

As COVID-19 cases and positivity rates trend in the right direction, and as vaccines reach more Michiganders every day, we write in hopes that employees will soon be able to return to the office while following guidelines and protocols to keep them safe.

Offices are some of the most controlled, low-risk environments in our state[1]. Masks can be worn whenever employees are not in a private space. Cleaning methods, social distancing and daily health checks can be implemented in an employer-monitored setting and our employers are prepared.

From Grand Rapids to Lansing and Detroit, empty office buildings have a damaging impact not only on productivity, innovation, collaboration and mental health, but also has put an incredible strain on our communities. As an example, the City of Grand Rapids is projecting a $10 to $20 million budget shortfall due in large part to non-residents working from home[2]. The effects of employees staying home has caused once-vibrant downtowns and urban areas to lose businesses and jobs.

Michigan is also home to the world's leading office furniture companies. Their research, innovation and design capabilities position us to define what returning to the office looks like in this new reality. We just need the opportunity to put this know-how into action for the good of our state.

[1] Hicks, Justin "Wonder how safe it is to be out and about?" The Grand Rapids Press MLive.com, February 9, 2021
[2] https://www.woodtv.com/news/grand-rapids/grand-rapids-officials-warn-of-budget-shortfalls-ahead/

**We ask for action to allow employees to safely return to the office.** We believe this is a key next step in Michigan's recovery and are confident Michigan businesses can follow the proper health requirements to keep their employees and communities safe.

Please contact any of us with questions or to schedule a time to discuss this matter further. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rick Baker
President & CEO
Grand Rapids Chamber

Sandy Baruah
President & CEO
Detroit Regional Chamber

Brian Calley
President
Small Business Association of Michigan

Richard Studley
President
Michigan Chamber of Commerce

John Walsh
President & CEO
Michigan Manufacturers Association

Tim Daman
President & CEO
Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce

cc: Elizabeth Hertel, Director, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
Sean Egan, Director-COVID Workplace Safety, Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity