LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER

November 16, 2026

The Honorable Andy Schor, Mayor
Members of the Lansing City Council
City of Lansing
124 W. Michigan Ave.
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Mayor Schor and Members of City Council:

On behalf of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce and our members, I am writing regarding the emergency ordinance City Council is scheduled to consider on Monday, November 16, concerning overnight camping in city parks. We recognize the urgent needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and the importance of safe shelter and coordinated services. We also hear significant concerns from employers and residents about public safety, neighborhood parks, and the consequences of decisions made without a clear implementation plan.

Tonight, City Council will consider an emergency ordinance that would open ten city parks overnight for 60 days, through January 15, 2027, so that people without housing can stay there. A separate proposal would suspend enforcement of the City's camping laws in parks. We understand the intent. More people in our community are without housing, and the City's low-barrier shelter is not yet open. Those are real problems, and they deserve real answers.

Allowing encampments in our city parks is not one of them. It is not a short-term solution or a long-term solution. It is not a solution at all. It does not get anyone housed, connected to services, or out of the cold. It takes neighborhood parks away from the families, children, and seniors who use them, and it leaves nearby residents and businesses to deal with the consequences. Just last week, a man was assaulted and robbed in his tent at a downtown encampment, and nearby businesses had complained to the City about trash and crime.

Encampments are not safe for the people living in them or for the neighborhoods around them. The economic cost would be significant. Employers decide where to locate and grow based on whether their employees and customers feel safe. Visitors, conventions, and events choose Lansing based on how our city looks and feels. Neighborhood businesses depend on people

being willing to walk in their door. All of that is put at risk when encampments are allowed in our parks.

The City's NOVA ModPod initiative warrants a clear public update. Lansing purchased 50 temporary housing units in 2025, yet questions remain about when they will be available to serve people experiencing homelessness. We ask the administration to publicly identify the project's funding sources, expenditures to date, outstanding site and infrastructure needs, anticipated opening date, and any additional costs. The City should also clarify whether resources were redirected from other homelessness services and, if so, what impact that had on existing providers. These questions are intended to support responsible stewardship of public funds. If the initiative cannot become part of a clear, longer term strategy with Ingham County, it may be time to set it aside altogether and direct those resources toward approaches that are working.

In November 2024, Ingham County voters approved a four-year Housing and Homeless Services Millage. This is a county funding stream distinct from the City's budget, but residents and employers deserve to understand how these resources complement City investments. We encourage the City and County to provide a coordinated public accounting of millage allocations and expenditures, participating organizations, measurable outcomes, and progress toward stable housing. We also ask for clarification of whether county millage funding has been approved or disbursed for the ModPod initiative. Transparency about existing commitments should inform decisions about any new response to winter homelessness.

We respectfully ask that you:

1. Reject the emergency ordinance opening city parks to overnight camping, and any moratorium on enforcing the City's camping laws in parks.
2. Work together, starting now, on one clear plan to shelter people and connect them to services this winter, with a timeline, a lead responsible for it, and regular public updates.
3. Move the low-barrier shelter and warming center at 525 S. Pennsylvania Ave. forward as quickly as the process allows, and keep emergency shelter open on cold nights until it is ready.
4. Provide a public accounting of the NOVA ModPod initiative, including funding sources, spending, outstanding barriers, and an implementation timeline, and decide whether it should continue absent a longer term strategy with Ingham County. Coordinate with the County on transparent reporting of Housing and Homeless Services Millage allocations and measurable results.

5. Audit, in partnership with Ingham County, the organizations that have received City or County funding for homelessness and unhoused services, to better understand how effective that spending has been.

Looking further ahead, this issue calls for a larger conversation about a regional approach, because homelessness does not stop at city limits. The Chamber is always engaged on issues that affect our region, and we will continue to bring employers, property owners, service providers, and local governments to the table to find practical solutions.

Thank you for considering our perspective.

Sincerely,

Tim Daman

Tim Daman
President and CEO
Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce