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 to follow up on our ongoing conversations about public safety, including a recent discussion with Lansing Police Chief Robert Backus. Public safety remains a leading concern for employers across the Lansing region and in the City of Lansing. We want to be a constructive partner in strengthening enforcement, improving coordination, and ensuring that public safety tools are used effectively and with appropriate safeguards.

The Chamber's support for public safety is not new. In 2021, our own voter research found that public safety was City of Lansing residents' top priority. In 2022, we supported the City's $175 million public safety bond, which Lansing voters approved to build a modern public safety complex and upgrade fire stations. We believed then, and still believe, that public safety is an essential service and a foundation for a strong local economy.

We want to be clear: the Chamber strongly supports the men and women of our public safety community, and we stand firmly behind the officers of the Lansing Police Department. Being a police officer is already one of the toughest jobs in our community. Every day, LPD officers answer the call for victims, residents, employers, and visitors, often while working with fewer officers than the City needs.

Recent actions and proposals from City Council have made that job harder, not easier. When officers lose proven tools, face shifting rules, and do not feel the support of City leaders, it becomes harder for them to respond quickly, help victims, solve cases, and stay in Lansing. Our officers deserve a Council that stands with them, and we urge you to make that support clear in both your words and your actions.

Technology in public safety is here to stay, and it reaches well beyond license plate reader cameras. The Lansing Police Department, the Lansing Fire Department, and our ambulance services and emergency responders will all have more tools available to them in the years ahead. With staffing challenges, these tools help the City do more with less. License plate reader cameras, for example, help LPD find leads and solve cases that would otherwise go cold, as Chief Backus described to our members.

We understand and share the community's concerns about privacy. The question is how the City uses these tools in a smart way that protects the basic freedoms we all hold dear. The answer is not to remove these tools. It is to use them with clear safeguards.

We also request a comprehensive public review of public safety and quality-of-life ordinances and enforcement practices amended, repealed, suspended, or deprioritized since 2020. The review should identify what changed, why, and whether current tools and staffing adequately address concerns in downtown, commercial corridors, neighborhoods, and public spaces. This is not an assumption that particular ordinances were repealed or that changes caused specific incidents; it is a request for a transparent, evidence-based assessment that respects civil rights and identifies any needed updates.

We respectfully ask that you:

1. Oppose any ordinance banning license plate reader cameras in City rights of way, and keep the current camera program in place while safeguards are put in writing.
2. Direct LPD to adopt a clear, public use policy that covers data retention limits, who can access the data and why, audit logs, and regular public reporting.
3. Lead early and open community outreach, following the example of communities like Kalamazoo, where that approach helped residents understand and accept this technology.
4. Revisit the aggressive solicitation outline the Chamber previously shared with the City. Communities like Ann Arbor have a clear ordinance and post it publicly, so residents, visitors, and businesses know what is expected.
5. Strengthen coordination downtown between LPD, the State of Michigan, the Michigan State Police, federal agencies, and Downtown Lansing Inc.
6. Ask City staff to make local permitting faster and simpler for employers who want to add security cameras on their own property.

7. Conduct and publicly release the review of public safety and quality-of-life ordinances and enforcement practices changed since 2020, with recommendations developed alongside LPD, residents, and employers.

Downtown deserves special attention. The State of Michigan is a neighbor and partner in our downtown, and federal agencies have a presence there too. With LPD short on officers, we encourage your administration to work with the State, the Michigan State Police, and our federal partners on how they can extend their reach and help keep the whole downtown safe. We also support Downtown Lansing Inc.'s proposal for downtown ambassadors. More people downtown, including more residents as new housing opens, makes downtown safer for everyone. That progress depends on better coordination between the City and the State.

The Chamber is already part of this work. We convene employers, share what we hear from our members, and bring partners like Chief Backus to the table. We want to keep doing more of this alongside the administration and City Council. Thank you for your leadership and for considering our perspective.

Sincerely,

Tim Daman

Tim Daman
President and CEO

cc: Chief Robert Backus, Lansing Police Department