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Economic Development Leaders for Michigan Unveil Top 10 Priorities for Statewide Growth and Prosperity

KALAMAZOO, Mich. –Economic Development Leaders for Michigan (EDLM), a coalition of the state’s premier regional economic development organizations, today announced a unified list of 10 priorities designed to position Michigan for long-term growth, innovation and prosperity.

Representing regions that comprise 79% of the state’s population and 84% of its gross domestic product, EDLM brings together leaders with over 225 years of combined experience in economic development. The coalition is committed to advancing strategies that will drive business investment, talent development, community revitalization and innovation across the state.

“These unified priorities are designed to equip our regions and communities with the tools they need to compete for—and win—job-creating opportunities,” said Jonas Peterson, CEO of Southwest Michigan First. “They reflect our shared focus on supporting and retaining existing businesses, attracting high-impact investments, revitalizing communities and growing the talent pipelines that will power Michigan’s future. By aligning around these competitive tools, we can strengthen our economy today and lay the groundwork for long-term opportunity and success.”

The **Top 10 Economic Development Priorities** outlined by EDLM include targeted investments and policy reforms across four key categories:

Business Attraction and Retention

- **Maintain Business Development Program at \$100 million** to stay competitive for job-creating investments.
- **Adopt a performance-based, accountable withholding tax incentive** to support impactful project attraction and expansion.

Community Development

- **Renew and fund the Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) Program at \$50 million** to support vibrant, place-based development.
- **Renew and fund the Community Revitalization Program (CRP) at \$50 million** to reinvest in communities across Michigan.

- **Modernize locally driven programs:**
 - **SmartZone:** Extend expiring TIF agreements by 15 years, with potential for additional extensions based on local approval.
 - **Transformational Brownfield Program:** Simplify program access and remove funding caps to unlock more redevelopment opportunities.
- **Fund the Regional Strategic Site Readiness Program at \$50 million annually** to accelerate development of competitive, investment-ready sites.

Talent

- **Maintain the Going PRO Talent Fund**, emphasizing growth in advanced manufacturing and technology sectors.
- **Establish a \$10 million Regional Talent Attraction and Retention Fund** to support locally tailored workforce initiatives.

Innovation & Entrepreneurship

- **Double the state's R&D Tax Credit to \$200 million** to encourage more private-sector innovation.
- **Recommit to regionally led Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programming at \$100 million**, restoring funding to 2012 levels (currently \$15.7 million).

"These are exciting and transformational times for regional and statewide prosperity," said Jaime Clark, President of Clark Logic. "The priorities outlined are strategic, actionable and essential to our state's growth. They reflect the real needs of our communities and employers—from startups to legacy companies to mid-to-large organizations—providing the on-the-ground support to grow talent, expand opportunities and drive Michigan's economy forward."

EDLM members urge state policymakers, business leaders and stakeholders across Michigan to support and champion these initiatives as part of a collaborative strategy to secure Michigan's future economic success.

About EDLM

Economic Development Leaders for Michigan (EDLM) is a coalition of Michigan's leading regional economic development organizations, working together to create a more competitive and prosperous future for the state. EDLM regions are among the most active and productive in Michigan, representing the majority of the state's economy and population.

About Southwest Michigan First

Southwest Michigan First is a privately funded community and economic development organization whose mission is to increase economic prosperity for all in Southwest Michigan. Founded in 1999 on the principle that *the greatest force for change is a job*, the organization works across all industries to advance economic, workforce, and community development initiatives throughout the seven counties the make up the Southwest Michigan region.

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