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Keep Michigan's beer sector hopping

Our two businesses — a Michigan craft brewer and a distributor specializing in Michigan craft beers — grew up together. We both started out small, and through hard work, innovation and entrepreneurship are expanding, investing and growing Michigan's economy. Arbor Brewing Co. is making some of the most highly respected craft beers in the nation and gaining new fans in Michigan and beyond. Rave Associates, a distributor that was built from the ground up, is helping Michigan craft beers like Arbor Brewing Co. reach new markets and grow its market share.

Our strong business collaboration is the kind of partnership that has helped Michigan become the fifth-largest craft beer state in the nation. Cooperation like this is the key to making Michigan the Great Beer State.

Now, we are joining forces and asking the Michigan Legislature to pass a package of pro-growth, responsible alcohol reforms that will help keep Michigan's beer industry growing well into the future so we can continue to compete and create new opportunities. These reforms promote economic growth in Michigan's beer sector, which is poised to expand because of growing demand. By passing these reforms, Michigan companies like Arbor and Rave can better respond to demand, reach new markets and ultimately create new local jobs.

That's why the Michigan Legislature should focus on the big picture and pass these reforms without delay. Here's what these reforms will do:

- They will help small startup brewers enter the marketplace by allowing them to deliver their products directly to retailers.
- They will help successful higher-volume microbrewers and brewpubs grow their businesses, expand their operations and create more jobs, by redefining production levels.
- They will speed up the licensing process and eliminate red tape, helping local businesses like bars and taverns that play by the rules.
- They will also allow bars and restaurants that have long wanted to buy glassware with logos to purchase them from independent third parties — quick, affordable and efficient — and address concerns that these businesses have long voiced.

For Michigan, these reforms represent a major leap in how we regulate alcohol safeguards. They allow businesses to compete amid the realities of today's marketplace, without sacrificing the basic foundation that has helped law enforcement and public health groups continue their work to promote moderation and rein in overpromotion.

Together, we are working to keep Michigan's beer sector growing.

Now we're asking the Legislature to join us and support this package to keep our economy growing.

Matt Greff, owner, Arbor Brewing Co., Ypsilanti

Jim Warbritton, president, Rave Associates Inc., Ann Arbor