

October 4, 2024

The Honorable Winnie Brinks  
29th Senate District  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Senate Majority Leader Brinks,

For the past three decades, West Michigan has been a national leader in establishing, nurturing and celebrating one of the most innovative and beloved sectors of our local economy: craft beverage. From the meteoric rise of “Beer City USA” to the long-tenured success of our cider and wine makers to the international acclaim for our distilleries, West Michigan craft beverage makers have become an indispensable part of West Michigan’s culture and appeal.

This is why we write to you today. We need your help and leadership to turn the upcoming changes to Michigan’s wage and sick time laws—aka, “One Fair Wage” and the revised “Earned Sick Time Act”—into workable solutions for both employers and employees.

These changes have the potential to further harm an already imperiled industry. The entire craft sector has struggled since 2020, with the shuttering of tasting rooms and production facilities across the country and restaurant sales declining due to inflation, rising costs and decreased guest counts. But we fear the worst is yet to come. With one-in-five Michigan restaurants expected to close as a direct result of these changes, there is no doubt that the establishments in your district and the surrounding areas will be heavily impacted.

Our businesses are cherished parts of the neighborhoods you represent and without common sense compromises to these planned changes, we will experience significant job losses, closures, and consolidation.

We agree with the spirit of these proposals—many of us take great pride in providing a living wage, health care, paid time-off, and even mental health services for our valued team members. But these changes, scheduled for implementation in early 2025, will force many local operators to exit the industry to which they have dedicated their time, talent, and savings.

Many of us have stood by you and your colleagues as you advocated not only for our industries but for all of Michigan. Today we ask you to continue that advocacy and let us be part of the solution, not the opposition.

If the goal of public policy is to do the most good possible with the least amount of harm, we urge you to recognize the reality that the goals of “One Fair Wage” and the E.S.T.A. are laudable but the policies as written are flawed and will do irreparable harm to many businesses and individuals within your district and beyond.

**Let us work together to craft sensible changes that support both workers and small businesses. We can use our experience and industry knowledge to recommend workable solutions that ensure higher wages and access to sick leave in a manner that allows operators to manage their implementation fairly and sustainably. We can continue to be a shining example of what is possible when industry works alongside policymakers to achieve outcomes that benefit everyone. Thank you in advance for your consideration.**

Sincerely,

Chris Andrus and Max Trierweiler  
Owners, The Mitten Brewing Company

Jon O'Connor and Kyle VanStrien  
Owners, Long Road Distillers

Kris Spaulding  
Co-Owner, Vivant Brewery + Spirits and Broad  
Leaf Brewery & Spirits

David Ringler  
Owner, Küsterer Brauhaus and Cedar Springs  
Brewing

Rosalynn Bliss  
Mayor of Grand Rapids, MI

Dave Engbers  
Co-Founder, Founders Brewing

Brett VanderKamp  
Owner, New Holland Brewery & Distillery

Amy Hamilton-Payne and Thomas Payne  
Owners, TwoGuys Brewing

Sara and Joel Bierling  
Owners, Bier Distillery

Edwin Collazo  
Owner, City Built Brewing

Brandon Voorhees  
Co-Owner, Eastern Kille Distillery

Chad Zitzelsberger  
Co-Owner, Third Nature Brewing Co.

Linus De Paoli  
Owner, 3 Gatos Brewery

Nate Walser  
Owner, Greyline Brewing

Paul & Amanda Vander Heide  
Owners, VanderMill Cider

Heather Van Dyke  
Co-Owner, Harmony Brewing Company

Eric Fouch  
Owner, Thornapple Brewing Company

Chad Munger  
Founder/CEO, Mammoth Distilling

Mitch Ermatinger  
Owner, Speciation Cellars

Gim Lee and Justin Buitter  
Owners, Railtown Brewing Company

Seth Rivard  
Co-Owner, Rockford Brewing Company

Jason Smith  
Owner, Michigan Moonshine

Jason Lummen  
Owner, The Peoples Cider Co.

Jakub Pala  
Owner, Moravian Sons Distillery

John Behrens  
Owner, Farmhaus Cider

David Landrum  
Owner, Two James Spirits

Roger Bonga  
Co-Owner, Cascade Winery

Zack VanDyke  
Owner, Wisemen Distilling

C.C.

Senator Tom Albert  
Senator Aric Nesbitt  
Senator Mark Huizenga  
Senator Rick Outman

Representative Joe Tate  
Representative Matt Hall  
Representative Rachel Hood  
Representative Phil Skaggs  
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Representative Angela Rigas