

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June X, 2021

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

We appreciate your past support of the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program. As you develop the FY2022 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you increase funding for this program from \$150 million to \$275 million. We request that this increase in baseline funding for the program complement any additional funding for an expansion awards program within MEP that may be appropriated through the passage and signing into law of the *U.S. Innovation and Competition Act of 2021* (S. 1260).

The MEP program is our nation's only network of public-private partnerships that supports small- and medium-sized manufacturers in every state and Puerto Rico. Through the MEP program, manufacturers are connected with critical resources that strengthen the competitiveness of the U.S. manufacturing base. MEP provides support systems that help manufacturers improve supply chain integration, efficiency, productivity, profitability, and job retention.

The MEP program has a proven return on investment for the American economy. Earlier this year, the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research found that for every dollar spent on the MEP program in FY2020, the federal government received a \$13.60 return on investment. Since 1988, the National Institute of Standards and Technology estimates that MEP has worked with over 115,000 manufacturers, leading to \$135 billion in new sales, \$24.7 billion in cost savings, and the creation and retention of over 1.3 million jobs. The program stimulates growth in the manufacturing sector, which already features a strong multiplier effect, while also providing a strong return on investment for American taxpayers. We should strengthen that investment.

MEP has proven to increase its market impact with each additional increase in federal funding throughout its 30-year history. The requested increase in FY2022 will allow the program to build on its success. In FY2020, the MEP was able to deliver more innovation service projects in

digital manufacturing and advanced robotics, increase the share of smaller-sized firms that received services, work with traditionally under-served populations, and provide additional cybersecurity awareness and training.

We believe the MEP program is critical to developing our domestic industrial base and supply chain. With \$275 million in funding, the MEP program could assist a greater number of smaller-sized manufacturers and help clients better confront the challenges of supply chain resiliency. During the pandemic, the MEP Program Supplier Scouting services were able to identify U.S. manufacturers able to supply critically needed materials, such as personal protective equipment and medical equipment and supplies. Increased investment would allow the MEP program to expand its efforts to re-shore manufacturers, develop domestic supply chains, and help the American economy weather future economic shocks.

Investing in this program is an investment in American resiliency. It is a job creating, cost-effective use of taxpayer dollars. We respectfully request that you continue your support of U.S. manufacturers and provide \$275 million in funding for MEP in FY2022.

Sincerely,

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

United States Senator