



April 16, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick,

We are writing to express support for the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership program—the only nationwide network of public–private partnerships that provides operational services to small and medium-sized manufacturers. According to the National Association of Manufacturers, 93% of manufacturers have fewer than 100 employees, and 75% have fewer than 20 employees. **Manufacturing in America is small business.**

Recently, MEP centers in Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota and Wyoming were notified by the U.S. Department of Commerce that the Department would not renew their funding—despite Congress authorizing and appropriating funding for this purpose.¹ We also understand that the Department intends to dismantle the program and eliminate federal funding for all 51 centers.

Considering the Trump administration's commitment to revitalizing and advancing American manufacturing, we think it is time to restructure rather than eliminate the MEP centers. We also recognize that the recent [U.S. Department of Commerce's Office of Inspector General report](#) recommendation provides a starting point for restructuring reforms. There is also no doubt among manufacturers and MEP centers that there is an awareness gap of these services. However, without any federal support, it would place those MEP centers with the fewest resources—particularly in rural and underserved communities—at the greatest risk of closure.

In fiscal year 2024, the National Institute of Standards and Technology allocated \$175 million to fund MEP centers. It has not been lost on us that the NIST budget-reduction goal has been met almost entirely by simply eliminating the MEP centers. This illustrates another reason for restructure rather than closure and makes it clear that the MEP centers should be part of another agency with Commerce.

A restructured and refocused MEP network will help American manufacturers improve their productivity and competitiveness. If we are going to realize the full potential of reshoring American manufacturing jobs, it will take resources that are laser-focused on and managed by those closest to the manufacturers in each state. This is an immense opportunity to help thousands of small and medium manufacturers grow American jobs. As such, **we respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Commerce pause its funding rescission for 90 days**

¹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1968/text>

pending a meeting with our delegation to discuss a restructuring plan for the MEP centers.

Specifically, we think that it is possible to create a more effective MEP network focused on:

- Lean-process improvement/operational efficiency;
- Cybersecurity implementation;
- Supply chain and market development;
- Energy cost reduction; and
- Leadership development.

This new MEP network would also operate under guiding principles utilizing considerations such as:

1. Federal performance-based funding based on manufacturing establishment counts by state;
2. Preference for MEP centers that are contracted to or with state manufacturing or similar trade associations, such as those in Connecticut and Mississippi;
3. Recognition that the MEP center business models vary by state, but all should be directly accountable to their respective state commerce offices;
4. Maintain match requirements to ensure private-sector co-investment in the MEP program; and
5. Ensure maximum funding is deployed to direct services.

In closing, we look forward to meeting with you to discuss our ideas for reforming the **Hollings MEP program and amplifying a leaner and more focused system that will improve U.S. manufacturing competitiveness demonstrably.**

Respectfully,

Alaska Chamber
AR State Chamber/ AIA
Arizona Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Arizona Manufacturers Council
Associated Industries of Florida
Associated Industries of Massachusetts, Inc.
Business and Industry Association of New Hampshire
California Manufacturers & Technology Association
CBIA
Chamber of Commerce Hawaii
Delaware Manufacturing Association
Georgia Association of Manufacturers
Greater North Dakota Chamber
Illinois Manufacturers' Association
Indiana Manufacturers Association
Iowa Association of Business and Industry
Kansas Chamber and the Kansas Manufacturing Council
Maine State Chamber of Commerce
Maryland Chamber of Commerce
Michigan Manufacturers Association

Mississippi Manufacturers Association
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Nevada Manufacturers Association
New Jersey Business and Industry Association
Ohio Manufacturers' Association
Pennsylvania Manufacturers' Association
Rhode Island Manufacturers Association
South Carolina Chamber of Commerce
Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry
The Business Council of NYS, Inc.
The State Chamber of Oklahoma
Utah Manufacturers Association
Virginia Manufacturers Association
Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce
WV Manufacturers Association

CC: All Members of Congress