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COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE,
AND TECHNOLOGY
RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 29, 2024

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

I write today in support of the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub application, led by the Greater Akron Chamber (GAC), to receive Phase II implementation funding from the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs ("Tech HUBs") program.

Ohio's 13th Congressional District has long been a trailblazer in polymer science and polymer engineering. Akron's existing polymer manufacturing ecosystem provides a local pipeline from education and training to the workforce. Among the world-class institutions included in the Polymer Industry Cluster (PIC) is the University of Akron (ranked #1 in polymers science and plastic engineering), Kent State University (designated as Carnegie R1 and specializes in liquid crystals), and Case Western University (also designated as Carnegie R1 and has a strong polymer program). PIC partners are also investing in industry-led workforce training programs in collaboration with universities and community colleges that are supported by grants from the Ohio Industry Sector Partnership Program. Local non-profits, like ConxusNEO, will help streamline pathways for talented individuals in the Tech Hub workforce in partnership with OhioMeansJobs. Strong coordination with labor unions through the Tri-County Regional Labor Council within the region will ensure the creation of good-quality jobs for workers from all educational levels and socioeconomic backgrounds.

As a member of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, I am uniquely familiar with the multi-disciplinary and far-reaching value the efforts of this funding will bring not only to Akron and Northeast Ohio, but to our nation. The Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub, under the leadership of the Greater Akron Chamber, will have a significant impact on our community's ability to lead in sustainability, manufacturing, and commercialization. The Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub proposal, which is born from the Polymer Industry Cluster (PIC), also led by the GAC, aims to advance critical polymer and advanced material innovations in the sustainability, mobility, healthcare, and semiconductor industries. Polymers touch every industrial sector, and this Tech Hub can help ensure that northeast Ohio is the global epicenter of innovation in future technologies.

I firmly believe that the Greater Akron Chamber's proposal meets EDA's goal to strengthen U.S. economic and national security through place-based investments in regions – such as Northeast Ohio – with the assets, resources, capacity, and potential to become a globally competitive Tech Hub.

I respectfully request that you give full consideration to the Greater Akron Chamber's proposal, within all applicable rules and regulations. Should you require any further information or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ES Sykes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Emilia Strong Sykes
Member of Congress
13th Congressional District of Ohio