

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 17, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

The Ohio Congressional Delegation writes to express deep concern regarding the immediate federal suspension of the Ohio Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) award, effective December 5, 2025. This action was taken before publication of a final OIG audit report, and without providing Ohio or its regional MEP centers any meaningful opportunity to review findings, respond, or undertake corrective actions.

Given the severity of the consequences to Ohio manufacturers, workers, and the state's industrial competitiveness, we respectfully but urgently request that the Department of Commerce pause or lift the suspension immediately, pending completion and publication of the final audit.

Ohio's Manufacturing Extension Partnership system is a nationally recognized public-private partnership that strengthens the small and mid-sized manufacturers who form the core of our industrial economy. In the last five years, the program has delivered essential modernization services to more than 40,000 manufacturers in Ohio. These efforts produce enormous economic returns, including:

- Over \$3.23 billion in new and retained sales;
- More than \$500 million in cost savings;
- Roughly \$795 million in new capital investment; and
- Over 23,000 manufacturing jobs created or retained since 2020.

The Ohio's MEP network is one of the highest-return economic-development investments available to state and federal policymakers.

The program's technical assistance—ranging from automation and robotics integration to cybersecurity upgrades, supply-chain strengthening, workforce development, and AI-enabled plant modernization—is indispensable to the competitiveness of both rural and urban manufacturers across the state. For many Ohio companies, the MEP *is* their engineering, process-improvement, and innovation capability.

On December 1, NIST issued a Notice of Award Suspension to the Ohio Department of Development instructing the state and its regional subrecipients to halt all MEP activities and cease incurring costs, based on *preliminary* audit findings. No draft audit report has been

provided, and the preliminary findings referenced in the notice did not include the underlying documentation needed for Ohio or its regional MEP centers to meaningfully assess, respond to, or resolve the issues raised.

This process is inconsistent with standard federal grant-administration norms and raises significant questions about fairness and procedural integrity. The federal action compelled the state to suspend operations as well – causing an immediate operational crisis.

As a result, centers across Ohio are beginning the process of winding down activities, including releasing staff and halting ongoing modernization projects for hundreds of manufacturers. Once lost, this specialized engineering and technical capacity will be extraordinarily difficult to rebuild.

While the audit process must continue, we respectfully request that you take the following actions:

- Maintain MEP operations until the OIG releases a final audit report and Ohio and its subrecipients have been given a formal opportunity to respond.
- Restore Funding During the Review Period. This will prevent irreversible loss of technical staff and capacity, protect ongoing projects, and avert economic harm to manufacturers across the state.
- Provide a Transparent, Written Due-Process Framework. This should include draft findings, a defined response period, expectations for corrective actions, and a clear, mutually understood timeline.

The Ohio MEP system underpins critical supply chains in defense, aerospace, automotive, semiconductors, medical devices, food production, and advanced materials. Halting these services jeopardizes ongoing projects in automation, cybersecurity, digital modernization, workforce development, and productivity improvement—many of which are essential to national-security supply chains and reshoring efforts.

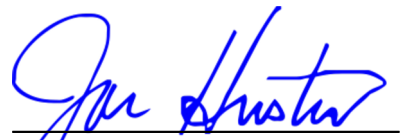
Given the profound economic implications, the lack of due process, and the bipartisan, longstanding Congressional mandate for a strong MEP program, we urge the Department of Commerce to restore operational continuity while the audit process proceeds to completion.

Given the statewide disruption now underway, we request a delegation briefing at the earliest possible opportunity—with participation from NIST and OIG as needed.

Sincerely,



Max L. Miller
Member of Congress



Jon Husted
United States Senator



Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress



Robert E. Latta
Member of Congress



David P. Joyce
Member of Congress



Mike Carey
Member of Congress



Michael A. Rulli
Member of Congress



David J. Taylor
Member of Congress