

June 16, 2022

Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC, 20515

Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of Chambers of Commerce across the Great Lakes region, thank you for your leadership on the America COMPETES/USICA legislation. The legislation promises to boost America's innovation economy to enhance our global economic leadership.

As the House and Senate continue to reconcile differences in the two bills, we wish to bring your attention to key provisions in both pieces of legislation that have the potential to build on the Great Lakes region's historic leadership in research, innovation, and manufacturing:

1. **Expand Pell Grant eligibility for short-term credential programs.** The House COMPETES Act includes a bipartisan amendment that expands Pell Grant eligibility to short-term education and training programs with language modeled after the bipartisan [JOBS Act](#). The expansion would enable students to afford and access more rapid and flexible postsecondary options, while ensuring that eligible programs are high-quality and meet employer needs.
2. **Include key elements of the National Apprenticeship Act.** The COMPETES Act contains a revised version of the bipartisan [National Apprenticeship Act of 2021](#), which the House passed in February 2021. This policy would prioritize Registered Apprenticeship opportunities that reach historically underserved populations, including youth and people reentering their community after incarceration.
3. **Invest in University Technology Centers and Innovation Institutes (“Innovation Centers”), Test Beds, and Regional Technology Hubs.** The Senate-passed USICA includes investments in each of these competitive funding opportunities, which would be transformative for research and development efforts in the Great Lakes region. The investments would provide funding for essential technology development activities like proof-of-concept development, prototyping, experimental development, and other actions that reduce the cost, time, and risk of commercializing new research and technology.

The Great Lakes region is home to many of the nation’s critical industries and the world’s leading research institutions, but we need strategic investment in our local workforce and innovation infrastructure to ensure that our region is well positioned to deliver cutting edge advancements in smart manufacturing, clean water technology, robotics and artificial intelligence, and other key technologies. The COMPETES/USICA provisions highlighted in this letter are critical to making our region—and nation—competitive on the world stage.

We urge you to support inclusion of the provisions outlined above in the final America COMPETES legislation.

Sincerely,



Diane Keller
President & CEO
Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Regional Chamber



Sandy K. Baruah
President & CEO
Detroit Regional Chamber



Dottie Gallagher
President & CEO
Buffalo Niagara Partnership



Matt Baumgartner
President
Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce



Jack Lavin
President & CEO
Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce



James Grunke
President & CEO
Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership



Charles Hughes
President & CEO
Gary Chamber of Commerce



Robert J. Duffy
President & CEO
Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce



Rick Baker
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Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce



Veronica Horn
President & CEO
Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce



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