



March 14, 2023

The Honorable Matt Huffman
President
Ohio Senate

The Honorable Jason Stephens
Speaker
Ohio House of Representatives

The Honorable Matt Dolan
Chair
Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Jay Edwards
Chair
House Finance Committee

RE: The Critical Importance of Funding New Innovation Hubs to Ohio's Economy

President Huffman, Speaker Stephens, Chairman Dolan, and Chairman Edwards:

We write to express our strong support for the \$150 million proposed by the DeWine Administration for new Innovation Hubs within the introduced version of the main operating budget (see appropriation item 1956F8 in House Bill 33). We firmly believe that now is the right time to make a one-time investment to fill existing gaps within Ohio's innovation ecosystem to spur economic growth and activity in mid-size metropolitan cities and regions who are well positioned to capitalize on this kind of investment. In doing so, we stand to improve Ohio's economic vitality and cement Ohio's position as a global leader in innovation and economic and workforce development.

The signers of this letter include members of the Ohio Metro Chambers Coalition, which is comprised of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce and Ohio's eight regional chambers/economic development organizations from Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown. Collectively, we represent over 40,000 employers across Ohio and actively convene stakeholders around key issues facing the business community. As such, we deeply understand the unique opportunities our regions face and actively work within our respective innovation ecosystems to identify and prioritize projects that have the highest potential in terms of job creation, economic growth, and workforce development and that serve Ohio's most unique high growth opportunities.

As we go about this work, we have established and continue to build upon deep collaboration(s) with public and private partners when it comes to making "big plays" to grow regional and state economies. As such, **also signed onto this letter (below our signatures) are a variety of businesses, industry organizations, economic development partners, and local governments who all support the proposed \$150 million for new Innovation Hubs and plan to engage in, support, and otherwise contribute to their success.** The broad array of entities included within this list demonstrates the interest and collaboration some of our regions have generated from public and private partners and in some cases, also speaks to a great deal of planning, thought, and effort put into positioning ourselves for an opportunity like this over the last several years. While we all understand that nothing is guaranteed in terms of funding, the sheer potential for new Innovation Hub funding has led all of our regions to collaborate in new ways, sharpen our respective ideas, and find new ways to solve problems – which has value in and of itself and is something we are excited about continuing.

While there are new conversations happening among regions around this opportunity, regional stakeholders from across Ohio have long collaborated with state and federal government partners on advancing critically important industries and in recent years, our three largest metropolitan cities have made strides in advancing Ohio's position as a global leader in healthcare. Following the work of Ohio's three existing Innovation Districts in Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati, the rest of the state has a great model to utilize and build upon through the creation of

new Innovation Hubs focused on other critically important sectors. While the three existing Innovation Districts are focused on healthcare in Ohio's three largest communities, and new Innovation Hub funding is designed to spur new innovative activities in other mid-size regions across the state, **we all see the utility in further investing in Ohio's innovation ecosystem and understand the value of making significant investments to unlock the full potential of unique high growth opportunities in key areas like polymers/advanced materials, aviation, glass technologies, and additive manufacturing.**

We firmly believe that new state funding for Innovation Hubs within mid-size metropolitan cities is exactly the kind of investment Ohio's regional economies need to address existing gaps and opportunities, create jobs and spur economic growth which will ultimately improve Ohio's overall economic vitality. While any investment(s) by the State in new Innovation Hubs would support brick-and-mortar projects, equipment purchases, and other expenses associated with the innovation process, it could also be leveraged by those of us pursuing federal dollars and private investment for innovation and economic development. In those instances, we stand to maximize the total impact and value of Innovation Hub funding and increase the overall ROI for Ohio.

With all of that said, **we strongly urge the Ohio Legislature to maintain the provisions proposed by the DeWine Administration within the introduced version of the main operating budget that would provide \$150 million in new funding for Innovation Hubs.** As you consider this request and weigh it against other priorities throughout the legislative process, know that there are advocates from all across the state from within business, economic development, local government, higher education and nonprofit organizations who are willing and able to articulate the value that an investment like this would have for Ohio – which we have been and will continue discussing with state legislators.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership and support on economic and workforce development issues and opportunities. If there is anything we can do to be helpful in your thought process, please let us know.

Sincerely,



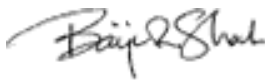
Steve Millard
President & CEO
Greater Akron Chamber



Denny Saunier
President & CEO
Canton Regional Chamber
Of Commerce



Jill Meyer
President & CEO
Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber



Baiju Shah
President & CEO
Greater Cleveland Partnership



Don DePerro
President & CEO
Columbus Chamber



Chris Kershner
President & CEO
Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce



Steve Stivers
President & CEO
Ohio Chamber of Commerce



Wendy Gramza
President & CEO
Toledo Regional Chamber
Of Commerce



Guy Coviello
President & CEO
Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber

CC:

ACE Laboratories
American Kenda Rubber Industrial Co.
America Makes
AMG Consulting Group
Boeing Company
Bounce Innovation Hub
Bridgestone Americas, Inc.
Chemstress
City of Akron
City of Youngstown
Cleveland Clinic Akron General
Continental ContiTech
ConxusNEO
County of Summit
Day Air Credit Union
Dayton Development Coalition
Eastern Gateway Community College
Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company
FocusCFO
HAPCO, Inc.
Huntown Products
Infinity Labs
JuggerBot 3D LLC
Lockheed Martin
Mahoning County Career & Technical
Center Mahoning Valley Manufacturers
Coalition National Polymer, Inc.
NovationSi
Pantheon3D
Premier Health
Promerus
Summa Health System
Think Patented
Trumbull Career & Technical Center
Trumbull County Educational Service Center
University of Akron
Ursa Major Technologies, Inc.
Walsh University
Youngstown Business Incubator
Youngstown State University