

June 3, 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 poised to deliver cutting edge advancements in smart manufacturing, clean water technologies, 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,



Sandy K. Baruah  
President & CEO  
Detroit Regional Chamber



Baiju Shah  
President & CEO  
Greater Cleveland Partnership



Dottie Gallagher  
President & CEO  
Buffalo Niagara Partnership



Matt Smith  
President  
Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce –  
an affiliate of the Allegheny Conference