

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1317

March 12, 2013

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.  
Washington, DC

Dear President Obama:

I look forward to working with you to establish an Institute for Manufacturing Innovation (IMI) in Rockford, Ill., to spur innovation, create American jobs, and increase our regional and national manufacturing competitiveness.

Manufacturing plays a key role in the Rockford economy and was particularly hard hit during the financial crisis. At its peak in 2010, unemployment in the Rockford MSA was 15.4 percent. As of December 2012, it was 11.2 percent and while this represents a significant improvement, we must do more to revive the economy and create jobs.

Rockford wields significant influence within the tri-state area and boasts a number of key capabilities that make it well-suited to serve as a regional hub for high-tech manufacturing. Based on its highly skilled workforce, strong manufacturing and aerospace presence, reliable transportation systems, numerous educational institutions, and existing partnerships between industry, academia, and government, Rockford has the potential to transform the manufacturing sector within Illinois and its neighboring states.

According to the Rockford Area Economic Development Council, Rockford is the No. 1 aerospace manufacturer and the No. 2 manufacturing employer in Illinois. Its central location in the Midwest and proximity to major transportation systems – two international airports, freight rail, interstate and Mississippi River - gives it a unique competitive edge. Rockford is a major population center with significant manufacturing talent. Roughly 25 percent of the Rockford area workforce is involved in manufacturing, and the majority of the 65,000 unemployed and underemployed workers already possess manufacturing skills.

Rockford is no stranger to multi-sector, public-private partnerships and its leadership knows the value of collaboration. In 2012, Northern Illinois University, Rock Valley College, Rockford Area Economic Development Council, EIGERlab and Workforce Connection were awarded a Federal Jobs & Innovation Accelerator Challenge Grant to increase global competitiveness and innovation in aerospace companies in the Rockford area. Within one year, the partnership surpassed its two year goals, creating and retaining more than 2,100 jobs.

Rockford is poised to take its high-tech manufacturing sector to the next level. At this time, we are working with our partners on the ground to develop and submit a full proposal for your review. Given our alignment with your mission, we believe this would be a natural and mutually beneficial partnership. We are committed to creating jobs in high-tech manufacturing and believe this will lead to shared economic prosperity. We hope the Administration will consider establishing an Institute for Manufacturing Innovation in Rockford, Ill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Rep. Cheri Bustos  
Illinois – 17<sup>th</sup> District

CC: Jason Miller, Special Assistant to the President for Manufacturing Policy