

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 15, 2025

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

The Honorable Craig Burkhardt
Acting Director of the National
Institute of Standards & Technology
U.S. Department of Commerce
100 Bureau Drive
Gaithersburg, MD 20899

Secretary Lutnick and Acting Director Burkhardt,

We write with concern over the recent National Institute of Standards & Technology (NIST) decision regarding the Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS). We are enclosing a letter we received from Iowa manufacturing businesses, Chambers of Commerce, and Iowa State University concerning the non-renewal and federal funding stoppage of the Manufacturing Extension Program (MEP) cooperative agreement.

As Iowa's federal delegation [Iowan Senators and Members of Congress], we have seen the crucial role CIRAS has played in aiding and growing our state's manufacturing sector and how critical the Center has been to our state's economic success. As you will read in the letter from concerned organizations that have firsthand knowledge of the importance of CIRAS to the manufacturing industry, the Center has helped Iowa's small-to-medium-sized manufacturers for over six decades. Though the total impact of CIRAS since the Kennedy Administration is truly incalculable and indispensable, in the last five years alone, they have served 1,500 Iowa manufacturers that have reported \$1.4 billion in financial results.

Additionally, in the non-renewal notice from NIST, it mentioned that the U.S. Department of Commerce is reprioritizing to ensure United States leadership in emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). The work of CIRAS in just the past 12 months has included 16 AI-focused events with almost 400 attendees and 38 AI-focused projects. These AI projects included 9 projects using sensors and data to collect data for AI use, 27 projects leveraging AI tools for business marketing, and 3 projects to develop and implement new AI tools for manufacturers. Additionally, CIRAS has worked with manufacturing enterprises in almost every industry over the last 62 years since its founding. The manufacturing jobs being supported by CIRAS programs in Iowa are supporting emerging technologies and future-ready industries.

As we work together to support President Trump's prodigious goal of growing domestic manufacturing and reducing reliance on foreign industry, we believe that CIRAS should continue to be a key pillar of the MEP. We ask that all due consideration is given to resume or begin anew the cooperative agreement between CIRAS and the MEP.

Sincerely,



Randy Feenstra
Member of Congress



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress



Mariannette Miller-Meeks
Member of Congress



Zach Nunn
Member of Congress