

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2023

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dr. Laurie E. Locascio
National Institute of Standards and Technology
(NIST)
U.S. Department of Commerce
100 Bureau Drive
Gaithersburg, MD 20899

Dear Secretary Raimondo and Dr. Locascio:

Thank you for your leadership in implementing the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act and working to support our manufacturers here at home. We write today to urge the Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to follow Congressional intent in the creation of a centralized Supply Chain Database managed by the National Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP).

We helped incorporate the National MEP Supply Chain Database Act (S.3290 / H.R.6118) in the CHIPS and Science Act to ensure the establishment of a national database that will support the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Program and state MEP centers' ability to connect small and medium-sized firms in national supply chains and to minimize U.S. vulnerability to supply chain disruptions.

As you know, the disruptions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the recent economic conditions in the United States highlighted the widespread and significant supply chain vulnerabilities. This has reinforced the need for manufacturers and suppliers to communicate more effectively to respond rapidly to national emergencies and other disasters such as extreme weather. It is necessary to have a centralized national database that will enhance the ability of manufacturers to ensure that the United States is able to respond quickly and effectively during national disasters and periods of economic uncertainty.

On February 27, 2023, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) announced that it would issue a new Request for Applications 2023-NIST-RFA-MEAPP-01 – Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Expansion Awards Pilot Program (MEAPP), MEP National Supply Chain Optimization and Intelligence Network. This new opportunity will eventually lead to the implementation of projects to establish a pilot national database supply chain database. Our offices have been notified that MEP will pilot a National Supply Chain Optimization and Intelligence Network program to support nationwide coordination of comprehensive supplier scouting, optimize supply network service offerings, and capture marketplace supplier data for public use. Additionally, successful applicants will be awarded cooperative agreements up to \$400,000 over two years.

We appreciate the Department's work towards creating a pilot national supply chain database. However, the Department should move towards the creation of a permanent, centralized database so that manufacturers have access to a comprehensive MEP database network—improving the interconnectivity of manufacturers. The Supply Chain Database is being created to avoid a repeat of bottlenecks which emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic when an information gap created obstacles for manufacturers to identify how they could access essential out-of-state resources. We have concerns that if the Supply Chain Database is created in a

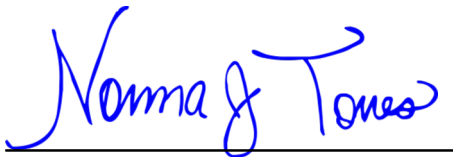
decentralized manner, manufacturers will not have the tools at their disposal to effectively respond to a future national emergency.

Accordingly, please reply to the following questions:

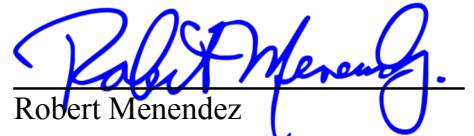
1. How is the Department meeting the Congressional intent of establishing a centralized National MEP Supply Chain Database providing a singular hub for supply chain information?
2. Do you require any additional assistance from Congress to successfully implement the Supply Chain Database?
3. What is the estimated timeline for creating the Supply Chain Database?

Thank you for your consideration and for the work you and the Administration are doing to protect American manufacturers and to improve our supply chain infrastructure.

Sincerely,



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Robert Menendez
United States Senator