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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 24, 2024

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

I write to you in support of the City of Allentown's application for Phase 2 of the Economic Development Administration's (EDA's) Recompete Pilot Program. The City of Allentown is well positioned to receive funding through the Recompete Pilot Program as a diverse community with great potential yet persistent economic distress. As EDA proceeds with awarding Phase 2 of the Recompete Pilot Program funding, I urge you to give the City's proposal full and fair consideration.

The Recompete Pilot Program represents the realization of a shared goal amongst my colleagues and myself: reinvigorating communities struggling to overcome persistent economic distress. By infusing funding for long-term, place-based strategies, the Recompete Pilot Program will support sustainable and equitable economic revitalization in communities that have experienced disinvestment despite an abundance of potential. One such community is the City of Allentown, which has faced longstanding barriers to reducing its prime-age employment gap (PAEG) but is also seeing emerging economic growth and opportunities in the region to advance economic prosperity equitably for its residents.

This program is about more than just placing people into jobs. When folks have the skills and the resources they need to compete for good-paying jobs, they can provide for their families, get quality health care, and improve their quality of life. That makes our communities stronger. With its unique challenges and access to a wealth of assets, the City is well positioned to carry out the mission of Phase 2 of the Recompete Pilot Program.

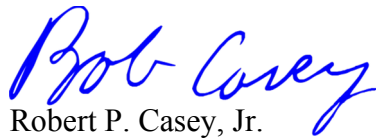
The City of Allentown has shared with me the promising work occurring in the Lehigh Valley in key sectors like manufacturing and health care. However, I understand that much of the City's population has been locked out of these opportunities to contribute to the area's robust economic activity as a result of several key barriers examined through Phase 1 of the Recompete Pilot Program. As the Lehigh Valley continues to grow quickly, it is imperative that underserved areas of the City of Allentown do not continue to be left behind. I understand that the City has an ambitious plan of slashing its PAEG by identifying and targeting its most diverse and disadvantaged neighborhoods and removing barriers to employment while connecting residents

to the fast-growing industries in the region. I am told that they have identified a series of component projects, including creating a continuum of career readiness, growing careers in advanced manufacturing and other high-demand professions, aligning job training provided to people reentering the workforce after incarceration with critical regional industries, expanding access to affordable, flexible childcare options, investing in transit systems to advance job access, investing in site development, and developing health care career pathways to align with local needs.

During my time representing the Commonwealth, I have worked with many community leaders who have had the tools and expertise to identify barriers to local growth yet often lack sufficient resources to implement comprehensive and meaningful economic strategies that can transform the lives of working families. Recent investments like the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 offer a critical opportunity to provide these resources and deliver a fair shot for every community. As EDA prepares its first round of Recompete Pilot Program implementation funding, I am hopeful that investments can reach places like the City of Allentown that are ready and capable of maximizing this once-in-a-generation investment.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration. Please include this letter in the official record of the application. Consistent with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations, I also respectfully request that you keep me informed of the status of this grant application. Finally, if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact me or my staff at (202) 224-6324.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator