United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 13, 2026

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

RE: WNC Life Sciences
Applicant: Research Triangle Institute (Lead Applicant)
UEI: JJHCMK4NT5N3

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

We write on behalf of the WNC Life Sciences project, a joint application led by the Research Triangle Institute for the Economic Development Administration's Disaster Supplemental Grant, Industry Transformation Path project for $50 million. It is our understanding that this multi-project life sciences economic development plan offers a path to strengthen Western North Carolina's economic resilience and sustain long-term growth by materially advancing the region's life sciences and biotechnology sector.

Hurricane Helene devastated Western North Carolina on September 27, 2024. With over 30 inches of rainfall, catastrophic wind and flooding claimed the lives of over 100 North Carolinians. Among the carnage, 73,000 homes, 145 healthcare facilities, and 6,900 roads and bridges were damaged or destroyed. Across the region, employment fell by 19,000 jobs.

We have been told that the WNC Life Sciences project will pair regional coordination with apprenticeship and entrepreneurship programs focused on biomanufacturing and ag tech, and commercialization support with workforce development programming across multiple counties impacted by Hurricane Helene. Partners in this collaborative effort include the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, the NC Biotechnology Center, Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute, NC IDEA, First Flight Venture Center, Dogwood Health Trust, the Western Council of Governments, Burke, and McDowell Counties.

We thank you for giving the Research Triangle Institute's application for the Disaster Supplemental Grant, Industry Transformation Path, your fair and prompt consideration. Please contact our offices if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely

Ted Budd
U.S. Senator

Virginia Foxx
Member of Congress

Tim Moore
Member of Congress

Pat Harrigan
Member of Congress

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