March 11, 2022

The Honorable Gina Raimondo  The Honorable Alejandra Y. Castillo
Secretary  Assistant Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce  U.S. Economic Development Administration

Dear Secretary Raimondo and Assistant Secretary Castillo:

I write in support of Southwestern Pennsylvania’s Build Back Better Regional Challenge application. In the last decade, the robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) sectors have grown exponentially in Southwestern Pennsylvania (SWPA), and this application will help to ensure that all our residents can share in the opportunities provided by this emerging technology. I am impressed that this application has brought together a coalition to think strategically about expanding this cluster. Representatives from regional governments, workforce agencies, educational institutions at multiple levels, research centers, nonprofit and community-serving organizations, and innovators and businesses have guided the development of a portfolio of important projects serving a compelling vision for the regional cluster.

If the projection is approved for Phase II funding, my administration is committed to partnering with the SWPA coalition to ensure that this critical project is completed successfully. This proposal builds upon major investments by Pennsylvania to support the inclusive growth of robotics and AI in the region. These investments include funding to build the research and commercial facilities that have sparked innovation and job growth and a historic commitment to expand computer science education to all communities in Pennsylvania. This proposal has the opportunity to foster significant additional job and business growth and expand opportunity throughout the region.

The resulting outcomes of these projects and corresponding state initiatives – an enhanced, inclusive, and more resilient workforce; increased employment in family-sustaining jobs resulting from robotics and AI adoption across industries; and a more robust robotics and AI entrepreneurial ecosystem to commercialize innovations that create jobs, earnings, and economic growth – will strengthen Southwestern Pennsylvania and support the region’s long-term recovery.

I support the vision that the region is developing and exciting future it creates for our commonwealth. Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of their application.

Sincerely,

TOM WOLF
Governor