

The U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Science, Space and Technology

Chairman - Frank Lucas
Ranking Member - Zoe Lofgren

May 16, 2024

Dear Leaders of the Committee on Science, Space and Technology

As former Directors of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), we write to share our enthusiastic support for establishing a non-profit foundation on behalf of NIST, as proposed in the *Expanding Partnerships for Innovation and Competitiveness Act*. The mission of NIST is to promote U.S. innovation and industrial competitiveness by advancing measurement science, standards and technology in ways that enhance economic security and improve our quality of life. Other federal agencies including USDA, NIH, CDC, and DOE have benefited substantially in their mission delivery through the independent non-profit foundations which were established on their behalf, and which have provided significantly greater flexibility in providing support for carrying out the agency mission and objectives.

As former leaders of NIST during both Democratic and Republican administrations over the past two decades, our collective experience affords us important insight on both the policy and administrative implications of this legislative proposal. We can clearly see the benefits of having a foundation established on behalf of NIST and its mission and people. Such a foundation will enable sources of private capital and philanthropic funding to be made available to assist in accomplishing the NIST goals and initiatives.

An independent foundation will provide greater opportunities for technology transfer, entrepreneurship, innovation, as well as new public and private sector partnerships that can leverage the technical expertise, capabilities and inventions arising from NIST. The development and commercial deployment of technologies that have NIST origins can be facilitated by access to new sources of early-stage funding as well as support resources, such as business incubation and accelerator capabilities. Such a foundation may also be able to support the retention and/or re-entry of scientists and engineers who otherwise must leave federal employment due to their involvement in starting an entrepreneurial technology venture.

A foundation for NIST will be able to provide support for training, education, and professional development for the next generation of researchers and leaders in fields important to the economy and U.S. competitiveness. Additionally, many of the people working at NIST are not federal employees, but rather are postdoctoral research scientists, visiting researchers, graduate students, science & technology policy fellows, and other contributors comprising the large community of NIST Associates. Having a foundation will

enable funds and resources to be made available for the education and career development of Associates, and further, to allow their contributions and achievements at NIST to be formally recognized.

A foundation for NIST will also have the potential to enhance the quality of the community of NIST and its outreach, supporting convenings and collaborations. Having the capabilities for funding to support international partnerships and participation in global standards and metrology efforts can also be enabled by the new non-profit foundation.

Throughout our periods of service at NIST, we have seen the many possibilities that a foundation for NIST could offer. The flexibilities that such an independent non-profit entity would provide through funding for initiatives, enabling new collaborations, and developing the workforce of tomorrow will further leverage the great capabilities and strengths of NIST.

We appreciate your attention to this proposed legislation, and we are prepared to assist in any way we can. Passage of this legislation will be an important step for America's innovation ecosystem and for U.S. industrial competitiveness.

Sincerely yours,

Walter G. Copan, Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology and Director, National Institute of Standards and Technology (2017-2021)

Willie E. May, Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology and Director, National Institute of Standards and Technology (2015-2017)

Patrick D. Gallagher, Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology and Director, National Institute of Standards and Technology (2009-2014)

William A. Jeffrey, Director, National Institute of Standards and Technology (2005-2007)

cc:

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce

The Honorable Laurie E. Locascio, Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology and Director, National Institute of Standards and Technology

NOTE: The views expressed herein are personal to the signatories, and do not represent the views of firms, companies, institutions, clients, or any others with whom they may be affiliated.