

# United States Senate

March 16, 2023

The Honorable Gina Raimondo  
Secretary of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

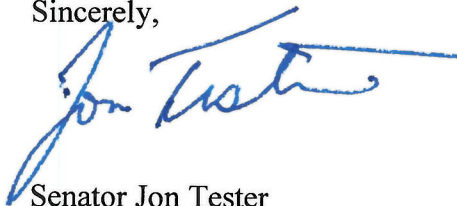
I am writing today to call your attention to and express my strong support for Montana's responses to the Economic Development Administration's (EDA's) Request for Information (RFI) on Implementation of the Regional Technology and Innovation Hub Program. Last month, I hosted an event in Missoula to draw attention to the Regional Tech Hub opportunity and to jumpstart efforts to bring a Tech Hub to Montana. One of my main goals for the event was to get Montanans thinking and working together on responding to the Tech Hub RFI, and I couldn't be more pleased with the result. In reviewing our submissions, you will find deeply thoughtful suggestions on how to make the Tech Hubs a successful initiative for the country and especially how to build thriving innovation ecosystems that work in rural America.

As Montana's only member of the CHIPS and Science conference committee, I fought hard for the Tech Hub provisions throughout the negotiations. Then, as the only Montanan serving on an Appropriations Committee, I successfully worked to secure \$500 million to launch the initiative this year. All throughout those efforts, I fought hard to make sure the initiative included real opportunities to give tech innovation a major boost in rural America. Great ideas don't just come from big cities along the coasts. For America to stay at the forefront we need to support innovation ecosystems wherever they can thrive, and that includes rural Montana. Congress recognized this and added my amendment to require that at least one Tech Hub be headquartered in a low-population state like Montana.

Now it's time for EDA and the Department of Commerce to do their part. As you build the Tech Hub program and write its first funding solicitation, I urge you to do so in a way that respects Congress's intent and provides real pathways for rural communities to win Tech Hub funding and build thriving innovation ecosystems with the program's support. Part of this is recognizing that a rural Tech Hub's path to success might look different from an urban model. For example, people are more spread out in Montana, and a successful rural Tech Hub would need to acknowledge that and perhaps build out a network structure across a larger region to enable the connections and collaboration that are key to success. Approaches to workforce development and organizational infrastructure could likewise look different.

It would be a misstep if EDA and the Department of Commerce were to focus exclusively on the currently prevalent urban Tech Hub model and fail to build in the program flexibility needed for rural Hubs to innovate and succeed. I trust that you and your team will keep these concerns in mind as you develop the initiative, and I look forward to keep working with you throughout that process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester". The signature is stylized with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Senator Jon Tester