

February 18, 2026

The Honorable Nancy Jenkins-Arno, Chair
and Members
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor and Economic Opportunity
Michigan House of Representatives
Anderson House Office Building
124 North Capitol Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Chair Jenkins-Arno and Members of the Subcommittee,

On behalf of The Shop Rat Foundation and the Jackson Area Manufacturers Association (JAMA), we respectfully request an appropriation of \$200,000 to support the Advanced Manufacturing Training Center (AMTC) in Jackson, Michigan. This funding will be used to purchase industry-standard Computer Numerical Control (CNC) equipment, strengthening the Center's ability to deliver industry-aligned workforce training and expand Michigan's talent pipeline.

This request directly aligns with the Subcommittee's priorities to strengthen workforce readiness, support economic development, and ensure Michigan employers have access to the skilled workforce necessary for continued growth and competitiveness.

Manufacturing remains the largest employment sector in Jackson County, employing nearly 14,000 individuals across approximately 260 manufacturing companies. Employers throughout the region consistently identify workforce availability—particularly individuals trained in CNC machining and precision manufacturing—as their most significant barrier to growth. Addressing this skills gap is essential not only for supporting individual employers, but for sustaining Michigan's broader manufacturing economy, which employs approximately 600,000 workers statewide and contributes more than \$111 billion annually to the state's economy.

The Advanced Manufacturing Training Center was established to directly address this workforce need through a collaborative partnership between industry, education, and community stakeholders. To date, more than \$3.6 million in private and local funding has already been secured, enabling the acquisition and renovation of the facility and demonstrating strong regional commitment to workforce development.

The AMTC provides workforce development across the full talent continuum, supporting early career awareness, career exploration, technical skill development, and workforce entry. Students as young as grade three are introduced to career opportunities in advanced manufacturing, while middle and high school students participate in hands-on exploration programs that build technical confidence and career clarity. Post-secondary students and adult workforce participants receive direct training aligned with employer needs, creating clear pathways into high-demand, high-wage careers.

The requested CNC equipment is essential to ensuring participants train using the same advanced technologies found in modern manufacturing environments. Access to industry-standard equipment ensures graduates are prepared to enter the workforce immediately, reducing hiring barriers for employers and strengthening Michigan's workforce competitiveness.

This appropriation represents a highly leveraged investment, building upon substantial private and community support while delivering measurable workforce and economic benefits. State partnership at this stage will ensure the Advanced Manufacturing Training Center reaches its full potential as a workforce development resource and economic driver.

Thank you for your leadership and your continued commitment to strengthening Michigan's workforce and economic future. We respectfully request your support and would welcome the opportunity to provide additional information.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly A Burr Kofflin
Executive Director, The Shop Rat Foundation, Inc.