

**Testimony
of
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**Pennsylvania Senate Majority Policy Committee
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Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to illustrate the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's unique position as a leader in innovation.

The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia is committed to regional development, promoting business-friendly public policies, and fostering economic prosperity. Our core mission is to create a thriving business environment that champions economic inclusion, enhances regional improvements, and empowers talent initiatives, all with the ultimate goal of making Greater Philadelphia an outstanding place for businesses to thrive.

Last September, our Chamber testified before this Committee at the Pittsburgh Technology Council to illustrate Pennsylvania's economic potential due to its rich innovation assets. These include world-class anchor institutions, robust research and development inputs, and a diverse pool of top-tier talent. While these assets ranging across a wide array of sectors position Pennsylvania as a leader in innovation, more must be done to translate them into thriving enterprises. Without focused public-private efforts, we risk losing companies emerging from our academic institutions and dynamic R&D ecosystems to states elsewhere.

Pennsylvania's standing as an innovation leader is particularly pronounced in the life sciences sector here in southeastern Pennsylvania. Groundbreaking research in gene therapy and cell therapy was pioneered in the Greater Philadelphia region over two decades ago, leading to the development of the first FDA-approved gene therapy and first FDA-approved cell therapy. Our region is the birthplace of these novel therapies. It is paramount that we capitalize on successes like these and others.

In 2017, the Brookings Institution released a report which pushed our region to action when it suggested that local leaders could collectively address some of the greatest impediments to Greater Philadelphia's global competitiveness by collaborating and coordinating at scale. In response, our Chamber developed a private sector-led and funded action plan aimed at leveraging Philadelphia's precision medicine sector, particularly our cell and gene therapy assets, as a potential catalyst for regional economic transformation.

This initiative included deep stakeholder engagement and harnessed the collective prowess of industry leaders to harness our community's standing as a global leader in these emerging disciplines of cell therapy, gene therapy, and gene editing. The multi-year effort aimed to share the narrative of the region's assets, support emerging and scaling companies, address the talent needs of the industry; and catalogue the specialized infrastructure needed for growth.

Today, Greater Philadelphia boasts over 60 companies engaged in cell and gene therapy research and development, a substantial increase from 30 companies in 2019, with continued interest in expanding operations within the region. Over the past five years, the Chamber, in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and other regional partners, has supported more than 418 business expansion projects, with nearly 45% of these projects occurring within the life sciences sector. Our efforts continue to fuel interest in our region which have also contributed to life sciences conventions and meetings being 40% of the business at the Pennsylvania Convention Center and often inspire long-term business opportunities. We see first-hand how collaborative, cross-sector, and inter-governmental efforts can produce tangible results.

The momentum in sector growth and regional interest persists, underscored by several factors that position the region for present and future success. Notably, in the Chamber's 2022 [comparative analysis](#), Greater Philadelphia ranked second out of 14 hubs in the United States engaged in cell and gene therapy sectors. The proximity to research institutions and access to a talented workforce serve as pivotal competitive advantages for our region. Furthermore, our recent designation as a Tech Hub for Precision Medicine led by Ben Franklin Technology Partners of SEPA contributes to our growth trajectory, attracting additional funding and businesses to our region.

Equally exciting is the non-degreed talent that our region is beginning to develop. Since 2019, the Chamber has convened a table of cell and gene therapy employers who have been willing to collaborate on shared talent solutions. As a result of their collaboration, we have seen the launch of multiple training programs focused on preparing adults for high-quality roles at those regional life sciences companies over the last 18 months alone. From the employer-customized programs between Wistar/West Philadelphia Skills Initiative with Iovance or Vintabio, and the Community College of Philadelphia with WuXi Advanced Therapies, opportunities for non-degreed talent are being realized. With successful youth and adult career exposure programs being offered by the University City Science Center and Philadelphia Education Fund, we are building a pipeline that will remain robust into the future. And these are just a handful of examples among many developed across the community.

All of these efforts will be further amplified through the recent regional collaborations that have come together to pursue large federal grant opportunities, including our area's successful application to the U.S. EDA's Good Jobs Challenge, spearheaded by Philadelphia Works. The funding secured through this initiative catalyzed the creation of the Keystone Life Sci Collaborative which is being led by a diverse core team comprising the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia, West Philadelphia Skills Initiative, The Wistar Institute, Montgomery County Community College, and Life Sciences Pennsylvania. The stakeholders in the Keystone Life Sci Collaborative will work together to address key challenges over the next 3 years in hopes to provide equitable economic opportunities for everyone in Greater Philadelphia.

The success and growth of the life sciences industry in Pennsylvania is not exclusive to Greater Philadelphia, nor is life sciences the only sector that is primed for growth. Pennsylvania enjoys several strong sectors, including robotics, energy, agriculture, and defense, where it holds a unique competitive advantage over other areas of the country. Lawmakers should focus policies and investments that will

support the growth and expansion of these industries or otherwise risk falling behind competitor states including Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, and Indiana, all of which have recently committed \$1 billion or more to their innovation economy.

Our Chamber has called on lawmakers to enact bold public-private sector innovation economy strategy that would leverage and scale Pennsylvania's existing strengths and build capacity in a state-wide, multi-industry innovation ecosystem. We believe the creation of a fast and flexible innovation fund could support and scale the development of diverse talent and career pathways across the innovation ecosystem; accelerate research, commercialization and manufacturing activity; and promote Pennsylvania's identity and narrative among a national and global audience.

The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia is unwavering in our commitment to fostering regional collaboration and innovation that will unlock the full potential of growth in our region and state. We are eager to continue collaborations with you and your colleagues to advance this shared vision of inclusive and sustainable growth.

Thank you.