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Chair Ernst, Ranking Member Markey, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. As Regional Innovation Officer, I lead the Heartland BioWorks Tech Hub (BioWorks), designated and funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) through the CHIPS and Science Act. With a focus on Indiana, the BioWorks mission is to support and grow Indiana's biotech and biomanufacturing sector, aiming to ensure that biotech invented in the U.S. is scaled and made in U.S. In operational terms, one of our key objectives is to connect U.S. innovators and startups with Indiana scale-up and manufacturing infrastructure—largely housed in small-to-midsized operations. With that, I deal directly with a host of biotech and biomanufacturing companies from startups to global leaders. This has helped me gain a deep understanding of both the immense challenges biotech small businesses face, as well as the opportunities that exist through coordination and federal support.

Indiana has been a quiet driver in life sciences for decades, largely bedrocked by global leaders in biotechnology – Eli Lilly & Co. (world's largest pharma company, exceeding $1T market cap), Elanco (3rd largest animal health company in the world), and Corteva (world's largest pure-play ag company) – having their headquarters in the state. These biotech powerhouses are supported by innovation churning out of Indiana's three R1 universities and the world's largest medical school. Yet, despite this monumental momentum in biotech, Indiana, like many of our Midwest peers, has lacked the critical resource-intensive pieces needed to create a viable – let alone thriving – ecosystem that spurs innovation, small business growth, and ultimately global competitiveness.

It is widely understood that the U.S. is getting outpaced by our adversaries when it comes to biotech innovation, biomanufacturing and supply chain security, and biodefense. This is despite the fact that our east and west coasts have been doing biotech innovation, and doing it well, for years. Winning the global biotech race requires that new innovators and additional regions step up. We cannot solely rely on the conventional innovation regions nor the typical Fortune 100 companies to secure our global competitiveness in biotech.

Startups and small businesses are the primary engines of innovation in biotechnology, often pioneering breakthrough therapies, diagnostics, and platforms that larger entities are slower to

pursue. They play a critical role in translating early-stage scientific discoveries into real-world applications, while also driving competition, job creation, and regional economic growth. However, specific to biotech, the barriers to success are near-insurmountable:

- high capital requirements (hundreds of millions of dollars),
- long and uncertain regulatory pathways,
- limited access to specialized infrastructure, and
- challenges in attracting sustained investment through lengthy development timelines (10-15 years).

Addressing these challenges takes an all-hands approach and the coasts have shown that this works, but we need more of it. This is where federal support and programs like the Tech Hubs and BioWorks come in. For years, Indiana has been bootstrapping its biotech innovation network in a determined attempt to smooth the pathway to startup success for its innovators. Now, through BioWorks coordination and EDA funding, we are overcoming longstanding biotech innovation hurdles, while growing our state's biomanufacturing sector.

BioWorks coordinates the region's strong contract development and manufacturing organization (CDMO) capacities and capabilities and robust pilot-scale lab infrastructure and funnels US innovators to these resources. By driving connections to existing – largely untapped – Indiana commercialization resources, we help secure and accelerate domestic biotech startup success. We also distribute grants (~$500,000 per grant in nondilutive funding) to help early-stage innovators fund their utilization of Indiana labs and CDMOs. Through this networked approach, BioLaunch catalyzes biotech innovation, supports new and existing companies in Indiana and beyond, and accelerates the US production of innovative bioproducts—creating a nexus where next-generation bioproducts are discovered, made, and distributed in the US. And, this is achieved through coordination of existing state resources, as opposed to investing millions of dollars in constructing new, purpose-built facilities.

We have awarded grants to both in-state and out-of-state innovators developing new therapeutics and biomanufacturing innovations that will now scale up in Indiana because of BioWorks. These awardees are gaining access to state-of-the-art infrastructure, technical expertise, and start-up mentorship that helps accelerate commercialization timelines, reduce costs, and mitigate risk. At the same time, connecting early-stage startups with our scale-up resources creates a business pipeline for these small-to-midsize operations. It also enables them to engage with the latest biotech coming down the pipeline, allowing them to ensure their manufacturing processes are capable of keeping up with innovation. Through our coordinated approach, this infusion of federal dollars is enabling BioWorks to achieve our aggressive goal: biotech invented in the U.S. is made in Indiana.

Admittedly, we do not address all barriers to biotech startup success. The capital requirements are still overwhelming large. However, VC follows where there are proven nexuses of activity. By creating a legitimate innovation ecosystem in the Midwest, Indiana will no longer be a flyover state for investors. This still leaves the regulatory challenges. However, this is an ideal opportunity for further federal partnership. This isn't just a case of us or other regions needing more VC activity. It's a case of multiple stakeholders rallying to make the biotech commercialization process faster, cheaper and thus more attractive to investment.

Complementary efforts by other critical Indiana life sciences entities who are testifying today, including the Indiana University Launch Accelerator for Biosciences, who is leveraging significant philanthropic support to dive into Indiana labs and pull vital biotech innovations into higher TRLs, and BioCrossroads, who is engaging and supporting Indiana's biotech sector, are demonstrating that progress builds on momentum. Capitalizing on the work of BioWorks, IULAB, BioCrossroads, and others, Governor Braun recently announced an unprecedented $1 billion investment in Indiana life sciences over the next ten years.

BioWorks, through our many partners across Indiana, is helping de-risk early-stage science, expanding access to critical infrastructure, and attracting private investment that might otherwise bypass nascent markets. We are creating a replicable model of foundation-setting that will enable biotech innovations to get out of the lab and turn into the small businesses we need. Through continued federal support, partnership, and alignment, groundbreaking discoveries can be translated into new companies, high-quality jobs, and globally competitive industries rooted in communities across the country.

Recognizing the potential for federal partnership, there are already grassroots efforts underway. BioWorks is leading a working group of the biotechnology-related EDA Tech Hubs to share data, best practices, and exemplary programs. These regional hubs are located in the Midwest or other burgeoning regions and thus share similar innovation challenges and opportunities. Leveraging the power of our federal programs, we are working together to support our communities' startups and industry and collectively maximize the impact of our programs. With further federal support, we can do so much more, driving the nation's global dominance in biotechnology