



Testimony by

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Chairman Perry, Ranking Member Stanton, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) implementation of the Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024, which reauthorized EDA through FY 2029.

The Administration is moving to execute the requirements of the statute and is making swift progress. A few of the authorities have longer lead times and will take longer to implement, but I am proud to assure you EDA is working diligently to put them in place. EDA has made thoughtful decisions in implementing these requirements in the most effective ways possible. With that I want to run through some highlights of EDA's implementation so far.

First, at the structural level, EDA has already submitted, and Congress has approved, a reorganization to stand up the two new offices required by the law: the Office of Disaster

Recovery and Resilience and the Office of Tribal Economic Development. EDA is currently updating its internal organizational structure to fully reflect each office's respective duties and implementing the missions of these offices as set out in the statute. The Disaster Office helped design EDA's FY 2025 Disaster Supplemental Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), which was released on June 4, 2025, and is currently accepting applications to help areas recover from disasters that occurred in calendar years 2023 and 2024, including Hurricanes Helene and Milton. The accompanying hiring authority Congress enacted in the section establishing the Disaster Office has also been used for EDA's mission delivery strategy. EDA was able to quickly onboard additional term staff to help it process awards for those areas eligible for funding from the FY 2025 Disaster Supplemental. Further, the Tribal Office held a tribal consultation on September 25, 2025, as part of the process to develop a Tribal Economic Development Strategy, as required in the reauthorization.

Second, many of the statutory authorities were self-executing and became available immediately to EDA as new available tools. This includes the new authorities related to implementing broadband projects, new eligible entities, expanded eligible activities under EDA's Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance authorities, and new flexibilities around capacity building and pre-award activities. The law also institutionalized many programs where EDA has previously received appropriations and now has direction from Congress on execution. This includes two programs in particular: Assistance to Coal Communities and Assistance to Nuclear Closure Communities. As the President has made clear, we must ensure the conditions for energy dominance and must course correct after years of decline in critical energy sectors like coal and nuclear. To that effect, among the nation's best opportunities for energy independence

and economic growth are our coal and nuclear communities – both of which have special relationships with EDA because of the attention called to them in the law. EDA intends to utilize these relationships to help advance the President’s energy dominance agenda and revive these hard-working communities after years of national destruction.

Third, EDA quickly adopted Congress’s new definitions for Investment Priorities and set up a process to notify Congress about upcoming award decisions. We immediately incorporated the five new Investment Priorities into EDA’s funding decisions and updated them on EDA’s website. EDA has also implemented a process to give Congress three days’ advance notice of any grant EDA is about to award.

Fourth, EDA is actively working on a new program utilizing the workforce authorities Congress enacted. As was mentioned in an EDA blog post and consistent with America’s Artificial Intelligence Action Plan and Executive Order 14179, we seek to help transition American communities towards this new vision by setting aside \$25 million in grant funding in support of the AI action plan. That plan recognizes the need for industry-driven training programs that address workforce needs tied to AI infrastructure investments.

Fifth, EDA is actively working to deepen the integration and coordination it already has with the Regional Commissions. In fact, in early February, EDA and the Commissions are convening in West Virginia to foster improved coordination, and to dive deeper into three specific areas that are important to helping distressed communities in areas covered by the commissions succeed in our changing economy: 1) closing the urban-rural divide on economic

development opportunities; 2) supporting development of a skilled workforce that aligns with private sector needs; and 3) ensuring these communities can participate in the economic opportunities afforded by emerging technologies. We look forward to working even more closely with our partners, some of whom are represented here today, to amplify the impacts of our respective investments and collaborate when possible to help improve lives in the nation's distressed areas.

Finally, EDA is actively working to update its economic distress eligibility criteria and corresponding grant rates. EDA is currently researching and conducting due diligence and intends to consult with subject matter experts and stakeholders before undertaking notice and comment public rulemaking. However, to ensure these changes are implemented correctly, this effort will likely take at least another year, including the solicitation of public comment.

President Trump's budget request for FY 2026 proposes to eliminate funding for EDA and cancellation of its unobligated balances as part of the Administration's plans to move the nation toward fiscal responsibility. While EDA and the Department of Commerce stand ready to execute this directive, we are committed to ensuring that any funds that are executed – including the activities I've described – are deployed in a manner that protects American taxpayers and supports communities.

In closing, Chairman Perry, Ranking Member Stanton, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for the opportunity to discuss the implementation of EDA reauthorization. We appreciate the collaborative relationships with you and your staff as we serve

the nation's economic development interests and create opportunities for distressed communities across the country. We look forward to continuing to implement this legislation and strengthening EDA's mission.

I am happy to answer any questions you might have.