

January 18, 2005

Joshua B. Bolten, Director  
U.S. Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Bolten:

I am writing today in support of the National Institute of Standards and Technology Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NIST MEP) program. Specifically, I urge you to fund the program at \$109 million in President Bush's forthcoming fiscal year 2006 budget request.

MEP is a nationwide network of not-for-profit centers in nearly 350 locations nationwide, providing the help small and medium manufacturers need to succeed. In Maine, MEP services are available to every manufacturer in the state helping them compete more effectively in the global marketplace. Improved efficiency, elimination of waste, international certifications, integration into global supply chains and networking Maine businesses with the resources they need to become more profitable are some of the outcomes that Maine companies have benefited from through their participation in the program. Over the past year, companies assisted by Maine MEP reported that they: created or retained more than 360 jobs, experienced increased and retained sales of nearly \$20 million, and over \$4.5 million on new investments. One can easily see the benefits of the program and the importance of maintaining the small \$109 million federal investment.

As you know, the MEP program had its budget cut by more than 60 percent in FY04. The MEP program is important to many small and medium sized manufacturers as it is the only federal program aimed specifically at this vital sector of our economy. At a time when our national economy has lost millions of manufacturing jobs, including several thousand here in Maine, we must make support of the MEP program and this segment of our economy.

Again, as the details are finalized on President Bush's FY06 budget request, I urge you to fund the NIST MEP program at \$109 million. Thank you for your attention to my letter, please do not hesitate to contact my office should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

John E. Baldacci  
Governor