

**Testimony of James T. Brett
President and CEO, The New England Council
House Democratic Caucus Make It In America Hearing
Tuesday, July 28, 2015**

Congressman Hoyer and members of the House Democratic Caucus – my name is Jim Brett, and I am the President and CEO of The New England Council, the nation’s oldest regional business association. The Council is a non-partisan alliance of businesses, academic and health institutions, and public and private organizations throughout New England formed to promote economic growth and a high quality of life in the New England region. Our mission is to identify and support federal public policies and articulate the voice of our membership regionally and nationally on important issues facing New England.

Let me first commend you, Congressman Hoyer, for your incredible focus on manufacturing in America. Your initiative has made great strides over the past five years, and The New England Council is pleased to see the passage of so many of your caucus’ Make It In America legislative priorities during that time, including the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act, the SBIR/STTR Reauthorization Act, and the Export-Import Bank Reauthorization Act – and on that note, the Council hopes that this Congress will move quickly to reauthorize the ExIm Bank before the August recess.

I would add that the Council was also heartened to see the bipartisan Revitalize American Manufacturing and Innovation, or RAMI, Act signed into law last year, and we were proud that Congressman Joe Kennedy was the lead Democratic co-sponsor of that bill alongside a number of other New England Senate and House co-sponsors.

I am pleased to be with you today to discuss our new report on the advanced manufacturing sector in New England and what lessons we learned in the process of compiling the study. In January 2010, The New England Council first partnered with Council member Deloitte Consulting, LLP, to release a report on advanced manufacturing in New England that debunks the myth that manufacturing is a dying industry, and highlights the significant potential for the creation of high-paying jobs in this industry.

Five years later, we have again partnered with Deloitte to document the new technologies, new processes, new companies, and renewed interest in what the future of manufacturing will look like. And we had tremendous input for this report, including nearly 150 interviews with individuals from all six states – including representatives from industry, higher education, technical assistance providers, and state governments.

We found that, overall, advanced manufacturing in a growing industry in New England, with our region being particularly strong in five key sectors: signal processing, navigation, optics, and measurement; aerospace and defense; medical devices and biotechnology; semiconductors and complex electronics; and precision machining.

We identified three key game changers that are transforming the advanced manufacturing landscape: additive manufacturing, or 3-D printing; digital design and manufacturing; and the Internet of Things.

A number of our findings and recommendations align with the areas of interest your members vocalized at your last hearing on July 9th, specifically: supporting fab labs and the development of Maker spaces; learning to utilize the powerful Internet of Things; promoting STEAM education initiatives; and expanding career training to address skills shortages.

To that end, our report recommends building comprehensive education pathways that feature multiple on-ramps and off-ramps, transferability of credit, and industry-recognized credentials, as well as increasing industry partnership and apprenticeship opportunities. Closing the skills gap means that each state must build a holistic model for workforce development that begins with hands-on learning in the K-12 system, continues into higher education --including community colleges--and understands the need to re-train the incumbent workforce.

One of the most critical recommendations in our report—and one that we can all help accomplish—is the rebranding of manufacturing. The fact of the matter is, many people still view manufacturing as a dirty, dark, dangerous, and declining industry, and that is simply an outdated image. While manufacturing has advanced over time, the general public has not been exposed to that transformation. We need to get parents, teachers and guidance counselors to see that today’s manufacturing is made up of the four “A’s” – advanced, advantaged, added-value, and accelerating – rather than those four “D’s”, and we need to expose kids to the concept of making things earlier in their educational journey.

As I like to say about our report, it is not only a roadmap for New England’s sustained advantage in the realm of advanced manufacturing, but it is also a call to action. While we enjoy strengths that other areas of the country may not, we cannot rest on our laurels. Our country enjoys strengths that many other nations do not, and I hope that some of my insights presented here today will help inform your efforts to ensure that our workers are able to Make It In America for generations to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to any questions you may have.