February 26, 2014

The Honorable Sherrod C. Brown
United States Senate
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
United States Senate
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Brown and Blunt:

On behalf of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and the Association of American Universities, we write to provide our preliminary support for the Revitalize American Manufacturing and Innovation (RAMI) Act of 2013 (S. 1468), pending one slight modification to the bill when it is considered by the full Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

In markup, we ask that you amend Subsection 3.h. of the bill to read as follows: “Chapter 18 of Title 35 USC shall apply to any funding agreement as defined in section 201b of that chapter awarded to new or existing centers for manufacturing innovation.” Assuming this modification is made during the committee markup, our associations endorse the RAMI legislation. We believe passage of this bill, with this amendment, will benefit our nation.

Together, our two associations represent over 200 major U.S. research universities located in all 50 states. Our associations and our member universities have a strong interest in contributing to a vibrant U.S. manufacturing base. We understand that manufacturing is critical to our economy, and that advancing the health of our manufacturing sector is critical to ensuring our nation’s future global competitiveness.

The RAMI Act would strengthen U.S. manufacturing by establishing a new network of regional manufacturing institutes. These Institutes for Manufacturing Innovation (IMIs) would promote new regional collaborations, bringing together community colleges and universities, industry, small businesses, federal agencies, and state governments. These groups would collaborate to accelerate manufacturing research and development, support small and mid-sized manufacturers, and provide the education and training required for an advanced manufacturing workforce. The IMIs would also ensure that promising new research discoveries and ideas – many of which are being developed at our universities – can be quickly deployed and utilized by U.S. manufacturers and start-up companies to create advanced, high-value manufactured products. Our member universities stand ready to play a role in making these regional manufacturing collaborations a success.

We hope that you can accommodate the change to the RAMI Act proposed above and want to work with you to advance this important bill as it moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

Peter McPherson       Hunter R. Rawlings III
President       President
APLU         AAU

cc:  Representative Tom Reed
     Representative Joe Kennedy