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September 7, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Job Creation Priorities

Dear President Obama,

I commend your focus on the need for policies that will create jobs and accelerate our economic recovery, and I look forward to hearing your specific proposals on the subject tomorrow evening. While it is true that Americans are concerned about the size of our federal budget deficit, they are also concerned about job creation and the uneven, slow recovery of our economy from the recent recession.

With this in mind I respectfully urge you to take this opportunity to advocate for investments in transportation and infrastructure, as well as in medical research, as part of the job creation agenda you propose. As Buffalo and Western New York transforms into a modern, 21st century economy, substantial federal investments in these areas will be critical to private sector growth in our community.

Investments in Transportation and Infrastructure

A significant federal investment in infrastructure has been a lynchpin of economic growth throughout America's history. The construction of canals, railroads, harbors, airports, water infrastructure, and the interstate highway system have all relied on significant federal support. The quality of the infrastructure and the resulting economic growth have justified that federal investment.

I believe we need a renewed federal commitment to infrastructure, both to maintain what we have already built and to encourage new initiatives that will create jobs during construction and sustain economic development after completion. Such examples exist in the area I represent. The Peace Bridge Capacity Expansion Project would better integrate Western New York with Southern Ontario, the second fastest growing metropolitan region in North America. And the Buffalo Harbor Bridge project would provide a direct connection between downtown Buffalo and hundreds of acres of urban, waterfront land ready for private investment.

In addition to a renewed and robust federal commitment, the private sector should be encouraged to participate in infrastructure investments as well. I urge you to advocate for an infrastructure bank, a type of public-private partnership leveraging private investment in projects of regional and national significance with federal capital. This type of partnership would create new interest in infrastructure investment, directly and indirectly creating jobs and new economic development opportunities. And especially important during these difficult budgetary times, it would do so with a decreased reliance on direct federal investment.

Investments in Medical Research and Infrastructure

As with infrastructure, the federal government has a long history of supporting medical research. This has happened for an obvious reason: the American people rightly demand and expect scientific advances to alleviate suffering due to disease. The initial federal investment in medical research has an economic ripple effect, creating markets for new products and creating jobs across the country as they improve the health of millions of Americans.

But our federal investment in medical research is on the decline. Adjusting for inflation, federal support for medical research at the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute peaked in 2003. This is unacceptable. The only failure in research is when you quit or are forced to quit due to lack of funding. When federal research funding is cut over the long term, we lose promising research and talented researchers.

These investments create jobs. In New York alone, federal investments in medical research directly support 39,210 jobs, with each grant supporting 7 high tech jobs on average. In Western New York, institutions like Roswell Park Cancer Institute, the University at Buffalo, Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute, and countless innovation firms at the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and across the region rely in some way on basic federal research investment to bring new products and discoveries to market. Without this investment these discoveries, and the jobs they create, would not be possible.

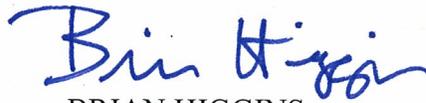
Not only should the federal government improve its investment in medical research, we should assist in developing the infrastructure that supports these investments. I have introduced legislation, H.R. 2747, the Cancer Centers Assistance for Renovations and Expansion Act of 2011, that would create a construction loan program for institutions dedicated to cancer research. Many research institutions have had to delay or scale back infrastructure initiatives due to lack of access to capital markets and the stagnant economy. By filling in this financing gap, the federal government can help create good jobs in the service of keeping American facilities the most advanced in the world.

China Currency Manipulation

Lastly, I know you share my commitment to the American manufacturing sector. I strongly urge you to announce aggressive measures to combat China's currency manipulation that puts American-made products – and American workers – at a devastating disadvantage. Legislation is pending in the House of Representatives to level this playing field but the House Majority Leadership has so far refused to bring it to the Floor for a vote. I urge you to use your bully pulpit to call for swift consideration of this important legislation.

Again, I applaud your commitment to our nation's economic recovery and I urge you to focus on initiatives that will provide direct and necessary assistance to regions like Western New York that are working to meet the new demands and opportunities of a modern global marketplace. I look forward to working with you on these efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress