

February 4, 2024

The Honorable John Thune  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leaders Thune and Schumer and Honorable Members of the Senate:

As artificial intelligence transforms our workforce, our national security, and the fabric of American life, the next Secretary of Commerce is poised to play a historic role in determining how this new technology reshapes our nation and cementing the United States' role in its development. During this past week's confirmation hearing, Secretary of Commerce nominee Howard Lutnick displayed a keen understanding of the challenges created by AI, the urgency for maintaining U.S. leadership in this space, and the Department of Commerce's critical role as a nerve center for AI policymaking in the current administration.

We urge you to support the confirmation of Howard Lutnick as Secretary of Commerce as his confirmation comes before the full Senate. Lutnick has shown a strong commitment to responsible AI policy and a clear vision for ensuring the United States remains at the forefront of AI innovation and security. His leadership on three critical AI-related issues makes him an ideal candidate for Secretary of Commerce.

First, Lutnick recognizes the importance of export controls on high-end chips and appreciates the need for a balanced approach to open-weight models. While America must expand its dominance in the open source AI ecosystem, Lutnick recognizes the risks involved in open-sourcing weights for models at the cutting edge of AI research and development, which may soon have capabilities that could shift the balance of national power. Lutnick's approach to these challenges will help safeguard U.S. national security by preventing strategic adversaries from gaining access to cutting-edge AI capabilities while ensuring the United States maintains its technological edge. His commitment to enforcing export controls will help the U.S. stay a generation ahead of China in AI development, a priority that is critical for both our economy and our national security.

Second, Lutnick supports the continued development of AI standards by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). These standards will serve as a foundation for safe and responsible AI development, give U.S. companies a competitive advantage, and shape the global marketplace in a way that advances U.S. interests. Lutnick understands that standards on

transparency, testing, and performance can build trust in this nascent industry, increase investment, and create a foundation for the free market to thrive. By prioritizing the advancement of AI standards, Lutnick will help strengthen AI technologies and ensure that the U.S. remains a leader in shaping global AI governance.

Finally, Lutnick's support for industrial policies that bolster domestic semiconductor manufacturing and expand AI-related energy and data infrastructure is crucial for the long-term success of America's AI ecosystem. By fostering the growth of a robust domestic supply chain for chips and the necessary infrastructure to support large-scale AI deployment, Lutnick will help position the U.S. as the global hub for AI innovation, reducing reliance on foreign suppliers and strengthening economic resilience.

The United States needs a Secretary of Commerce who understands the stakes of AI policy and is prepared to take decisive action to secure our leadership in this space. Howard Lutnick has demonstrated that he is that leader. We urge you to support his confirmation and help ensure that the Department of Commerce is equipped to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the AI era.

Sincerely,

Americans for Responsible Innovation  
The Center for AI Policy  
Encode  
Future of Life Institute  
Institute for Progress