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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R.

To require the Secretary of Defense to establish a network of regional hubs to foster innovation, collaboration, and rapid development of defense-related technologies, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. BELL introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Defense to establish a network of regional hubs to foster innovation, collaboration, and rapid development of defense-related technologies, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Defense Technology
5 Hubs Act of 2026”.

1 SEC. 2. PURPOSE.

2 The purpose of this Act is to enhance national security and technological superiority by requiring the Secretary of Defense to establish a network of regional defense technology hubs to foster innovation, collaboration, and rapid development of defense-related technologies to attract talent from across the United States.

8 SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

9 In this Act:

10 (1) ANCHOR FEDERAL DEFENSE INSTITUTION.—The term “anchor Federal defense institution” means a defense manufacturing facility, an institution of higher education that engages the Department on research, development, testing, and evaluation, or a military installation.

16 (2) DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY HUB.—The term “defense technology hub” means a regional hub designated and supported under the Program.

19 (3) ELIGIBLE CONSORTIUM.—The term “eligible consortium” means a consortium composed of universities, defense contractors, small businesses, nonprofit organizations, independent research entities, and State or local governments.

24 (4) EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES.—The term “emerging technologies” means scientific and engi-

1 neering advancements with potential military appli-
2 cations as identified by the Secretary of Defense.

3 (5) PROGRAM.—The term “Program” means
4 the Defense Technology Hubs Program established
5 under section 4(a).

6 **SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY HUBS**

7 **PROGRAM.**

8 (a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense
10 shall establish a program to designate and support
11 regional hubs focused on advancing defense tech-
12 nologies critical to national security.

13 (2) DESIGNATION.—The program established
14 pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be known as the
15 “Defense Technology Hubs Program”.

16 (b) DESIGNATION OF DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY
17 HUBS.—

18 (1) SOLICITATION OF APPLICATIONS.—Under
19 the Program, the Secretary shall solicit applications
20 from eligible consortia to be designated as defense
21 technology hubs under the Program.

22 (2) SUBMITTAL OF APPLICATIONS.—A consor-
23 tium seeking designation and support as a regional
24 hub under subsection (a)(1) shall submit to the Sec-
25 retary an application therefor at such time, in such

1 manner, and containing such information as the Sec-
2 retary may require.

3 (3) CRITERIA.—The Secretary shall select eligi-
4 ble consortia for designation and support under sub-
5 section (a)(1) from among those submitting applica-
6 tions pursuant to paragraph (2) of this subsection
7 using the following criteria:

8 (A) Demonstrated capability in defense-rele-
9 vant technology areas.

10 (B) Evidence of regional collaboration and
11 stakeholder commitment.

12 (C) Presence of anchor Federal defense in-
13 stitutions or mission-critical installations of the
14 Department that support or are early adopters
15 of emerging defense technologies, such as
16 geospatial intelligence, data fusion, artificial in-
17 telligence, autonomy, edge networking and com-
18 puting, human-machine teaming, and quantum.

19 (D) Existence of regional innovation eco-
20 systems with demonstrated success in
21 leveraging Federal, State, and private sector
22 collaboration, such as technology innovation
23 consortia, academic research clusters, and spe-
24 cialized defense accelerators.

1 (E) Demonstrated success in developing
2 partnerships and collaborative arrangements
3 with local Federal defense institutions and mis-
4 sion-critical installations for the purposes of ad-
5 vancing research, development, prototyping, and
6 transition of emerging defense technologies.

7 (F) Demonstrated success in developing
8 partnership and collaborative arrangements
9 with Federal defense institutions and mission-
10 critical installations in workforce development
11 and training programs to build a skilled pipe-
12 line for defense innovation.

13 (E) Potential to address Department-iden-
14 tified strategic priorities.

15 (F) Economic and workforce development
16 impact.

17 (4) GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION.—

18 (A) IN GENERAL.—In selecting eligible
19 consortia for designation and support under the
20 Program, the Secretary shall ensure that de-
21 fense technology hubs are distributed—

22 (i) across diverse geographic regions
23 of the United States, with a goal of design-
24 nating at least 10 defense technology hubs

1 before the date that is 3 years after the
2 date of the enactment of this Act; and

3 (ii) to regions in which eligible con-
4 sortia are co-located with, or readily acces-
5 sible to, multiple facilities of the Depart-
6 ment, including mission-critical installa-
7 tions, to maximize collaboration between
8 eligible consortia and the Department of
9 Defense.

10 (B) PREFERENCE.—In considering geo-
11 graphic distribution, the Secretary may give
12 preference to regions with demonstrated stra-
13 tegic relevance to national security missions, in-
14 cluding those with newly constructed or ex-
15 panded Department facilities and intelligence
16 community investments.

17 (c) OBJECTIVES OF DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY
18 HUBS.—The objectives of a defense technology hub under
19 the Program are as follows:

20 (1) To accelerate the research, development,
21 prototyping, and transition to operational use of
22 emerging technologies intended for military applica-
23 tions, such as artificial intelligence, edge networking
24 and computing, quantum technologies, human-ma-

1 chine teaming, hypersonics, biotechnology, and ad-
2 vanced manufacturing.

3 (2) To foster partnerships among components
4 of the Department of Defense, private industry, aca-
5 demic institutions, and State and local governments.

6 (3) To address regional defense technology
7 needs while leveraging local expertise, infrastructure,
8 and economic strengths, including proximity to Fed-
9 eral mission partners such as combat support agen-
10 cies and participation in existing innovation con-
11 sortia or university-industry alliances.

12 (4) To promote workforce development and
13 training programs to build a skilled pipeline for de-
14 fense innovation including partnerships with re-
15 search universities, community colleges, and voca-
16 tional programs.

17 (5) To enhance the resilience and security of
18 the defense industrial base.

19 (d) GRANTS.—

20 (1) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—Under the Pro-
21 gram, the Secretary may award grants to defense
22 technology hubs.

23 (2) USE OF FUNDS.—A defense technology hub
24 receiving a grant under paragraph (1) shall use the
25 amounts of the grant for the following purposes:

1 U.S.C. 3003)) or identified in the Entity List
2 maintained by the Bureau of Industry and Se-
3 curity of the Department of Commerce and set
4 forth in Supplement No. 4 to part 744 of title
5 15, Code of Federal Regulations, and consistent
6 with existing Federal designations.

7 (D) Establish mechanisms to prevent un-
8 authorized access to sensitive defense-related
9 research and technology.

10 (E) Establish necessary programs, infra-
11 structure, and processes to sponsor, obtain, and
12 hold security clearances for the purposes of en-
13 abling classified research, development, and
14 prototyping of emerging defense technologies.

15 (2) MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT.—The
16 Secretary shall, in coordination with the Director of
17 the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agen-
18 cy, establish procedures to monitor and enforce com-
19 pliance with the requirements set forth in paragraph
20 (1).

21 (f) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT.—

22 (1) GUIDELINES REQUIRED.—The Secretary
23 shall develop guidelines under the Program for intel-
24 lectual property ownership and licensing within the
25 defense technology hubs, balancing national security

1 needs with commercial incentives for private sector
2 participation.

3 (2) RETENTION OF RIGHTS.—The guidelines
4 developed pursuant to paragraph (1) shall include
5 provisions for the Department to retain necessary
6 rights for defense applications while allowing mem-
7 bers of consortia that are defense technology hubs to
8 pursue commercial opportunities as may be appro-
9 priate.

10 (g) FUNDING.—

11 (1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—
12 There is authorized to be appropriated to the De-
13 partment of Defense to carry out the Program
14 \$375,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2026
15 through 2030.

16 (2) AVAILABILITY.—Of the amounts appro-
17 priated pursuant to the authorization in paragraph
18 (1), \$75,000,000 shall be available to the Secretary
19 to award grants under subsection (d).

20 (3) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of
21 support provided to a defense technology hub under
22 the Program in a fiscal year may not exceed 50 per-
23 cent of the total cost of the operations and activities
24 of the defense technology hub under the Program in
25 that fiscal year.

1 (h) ADMINISTRATION.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall admin-
3 ister the Program through the Under Secretary of
4 Defense for Research and Engineering, acting
5 through the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Crit-
6 ical Technologies and in coordination with the Direc-
7 tor of the Defense Innovation Unit and the heads of
8 such other elements of the Department as the Sec-
9 etary considers appropriate.

10 (2) WAIVER OF ACQUISITION REGULATIONS.—
11 For any project of a defense technology hub under
12 the Program that the Secretary determines has a
13 total cost of less than \$10,000,000, the Secretary
14 may waive applicable acquisition regulations to expe-
15 dite development and prototyping, consistent with
16 similar authorities of the Secretary that were in ef-
17 fect on the day before the date of the enactment of
18 this Act.

19 (3) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS.—Each de-
20 fense technology hub shall, not less frequently than
21 once each year, submit to the Secretary an annual
22 progress report detailing technological advance-
23 ments, partnerships, and economic outcomes.

1 SEC. 5. COORDINATION WITH EXISTING PROGRAM.

2 The Secretary of Defense shall ensure the Program
3 complements, and does not duplicate, existing efforts such
4 as efforts of the Defense Advanced Research Projects
5 Agency (DARPA), the Manufacturing USA Institutes, the
6 Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs of the Eco-
7 nomic Development Administration (EDA), the Defense
8 Innovation Unit (DIU), and the Regional Innovation En-
9 gines of the National Science Foundation. The Secretary
10 shall, as the Secretary determines appropriate, align de-
11 fense technology hub activities with existing defense and
12 intelligence infrastructure to maximize the use of estab-
13 lished mission platforms and reduce redundant invest-
14 ments, particularly in areas where new Federal campuses
15 are designed to serve as long-term anchors for defense in-
16 novation ecosystems.

17 SEC. 6. EVALUATION AND REPORTING.

18 (a) INDEPENDENT EVALUATIONS.—The Secretary of
19 Defense shall seek to enter into a contract with an inde-
20 pendent entity to evaluate the effectiveness of the Pro-
21 gram annually for the first 5 years of the Program, and
22 biennially thereafter, assessing technology outputs, na-
23 tional security impacts, and return on investment.

24 (b) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not less frequently than
25 once each year, the Secretary shall submit to the Com-
26 mittee on Armed Services of the Senate and the Com-

1 mittee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives
2 an annual report detailing Program activities, defense
3 technology hub performance, and recommendations for
4 improvement to the Program.

5 SEC. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE.

6 The provisions of this Act shall take effect on the
7 date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of
8 this Act.