

**Testimony of Michael R. Graney to the Senate Committee on
Environment and Public Works**

Wednesday, June 21, 2023 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Good Morning and thank you for inviting me. I am Mike Graney, Executive Director of the West Virginia Department of Economic Development. I have been in this role for a little over four and one-half (4 ½) years since Governor Jim Justice appointed me. I still consider myself a recovering entrepreneur.

In my brief time in this role, I have a clear understanding and belief that the USEDA is a critical partner to West Virginia.

EDA has awarded over \$220 million in funds to projects in West Virginia since 2018. EDA's Assistance to Coal Communities has funded

so many critical projects in WV since its inception. It is wonderful to have a federal agency that understands the plight of rural America as it struggles to rebuild its economy after documented economic shocks.

EDA has and I hope, will continue to support community driven, economic development focused on creating good-paying jobs, building economic resilience, and accelerating the economic recovery for the industries and communities hit hardest by the downturn in the coal industry.

Infrastructure has and I hope, will continue to be the focus of a large percentage of EDA applications because it is the link to sustaining and expanding our existing businesses and critical to the attraction of new business and industry. Specific recent infrastructure (water, sewer, building construction/rehab) projects that assisted with new jobs for both new and existing industry expansion:

Nucor (Mason County PSD)

Mountain Top Beverage LLC (Morgantown Utility Board)

Great Barrel Company (White Sulphur Springs)

Interstate Hardwoods (Pocahontas PSD)

AmeriCarbon Enterprises (Wyoming EDA)

Gat Creek Furniture (Berkeley Springs and Warm Springs PSD)

Westlake and Blue Racer Midstream (Grandview-Doolin PSD)

West Virginia has successfully applied for and obtained approximately 93 projects since 2018. The EDDs (in most cases) prepare the applications and administer the funds. We are one of the few states in the country that have every county represented by an EDD.

We work closely with all local EDD's and all WV Regional Planning and Development Councils. And, the USEDA Representative to WV,

Tracey Rowan, is truly a fantastic partner. We have nicknamed her “The Rock Star”.

It truly takes local, state, and federal collaboration, cooperation, and communication to deliver successful projects and ensure sustainability and resiliency.

WV has been an energy state and we will continue to be by adopting an all-of-the-above strategy and we will likely need USEDA assistance as new methods of energy generation are put in operation.

WV has had several economic development successes in recent years, and we are pleased but we must press forward. We are small but we are nimble, and this makes us effective.

While many of our counties have enjoyed the lower 20% USEDA match requirement, often those places that need the infrastructure improvement the most have the least capacity to fund the match. 20% of \$4 million is \$800,000; that's a lot of money.

I urge the USEDA to consider criteria that may qualify certain projects or areas to further reduce or eliminate the local match requirement.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these remarks and good luck with finding the appropriate level of funding to re-authorize the critical work of USEDA.