

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Photo Attached (Caption Below)

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**Rep. Carol Miller Tours New West Virginia Hive Network Facility**

**Applauds Business Development and Support Efforts of the Hive and NRRDA**

**Beckley, W.Va. (Jan. 27)** – U.S. Rep. Carol Miller visited the West Virginia Hive Network’s new downtown business hub, meeting with Jina Belcher, executive director of the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority, and Judy Moore, director of the WV Hive and manager of the Country Roads Angel Network (CRAN).

Congressional business kept members of the West Virginia delegation from attending the mid-October 2020 ribbon cutting for the new office. As of this date, the nearly 4,000 square-foot facility is not fully open due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Belcher and Moore said projects like continued entrepreneurship development and support for small businesses, the recent investment from the Country Roads Angel Network into Iconic Air and the overall potential impact the early-stage funding brings, the expansion and build out of the Raleigh County Memorial Airport, and the increase in interest in the outdoor economy around the designation of the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve designation were discussed and ideas were shared on strategies to achieve them.

“As a small business owner, I know the challenges that come with starting and owning a business,” said Rep. Miller. “By providing small business owners with the resources they need to open and maintain a successful business, WV Hive plays a crucial role in our community’s business development and economic growth. I will continue to proudly support Southern West Virginia’s business community and organizations like WV Hive to make sure they have the tools they need to succeed.”

The West Virginia Hive has served 326 existing businesses and helped launch 44 businesses in its 12-county service area. It is currently assisting 73 clients with business advising and technical assistance support on business modeling, financing, human resources, marketing, and other services.

CRAN, now made up of 16 investors and mentors from across the country interested in diversifying West Virginia's economy, made its first investment of \$135,000 in December 2020 in Iconic Air, a Morgantown firm offering a software platform for the next generation of emissions leak detection and compliance. The accredited angel investment group is now seeking pitches from startups and existing businesses for its April 2021 round of funding consideration.

Belcher said she is appreciative of Rep. Miller's time and interest in the work of NRGRDA, WV Hive and CRAN. "We are very fortunate to have excellent representation in Congress. It makes a positive difference in everything we do to create opportunities for the cities of this region," she said. "When we need help with a federal agency, increased funding to help us be more competitive or engagement in an economic project, Congresswoman Miller has been there for us."

Moore concurred, noting that the state's U.S. Senators and Congressional representatives are on meaningful committees and are highly collaborative. "We are very blessed to have their full attention when we need it," said Moore. "From broadband and transportation infrastructure needs to financing for small business startups and expansion, Rep. Miller and her colleagues stand ready."

The WV Hive is the entrepreneurship program of the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority and the administrator of the Country Roads Angel Network. More information about the West Virginia Hive can be found at <https://wvhive.com/>.

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**Photo Caption:**

Emerging industry opportunities and small business support were the dominant topics during Rep. Carol Miller's visit to the new offices of the West Virginia Hive Network in Beckley. From left to right, Jina Belcher, executive director of the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority, Rep. Miller, and Judy Moore, director of the Hive and administrator of the Country Roads Angel Network, had a chance to discuss regional economic development opportunities and strategies to achieve them.