

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 28, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

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

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Budget
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Chairman Sanders and Chairman Cardin:

I am writing to express my support for further small business relief funding in any Build Back Better legislation. Small businesses continue to struggle as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. Existing relief programs remain underfunded and in need of replenishment, while other industries face a long road to recovery after a year of devastation. It is as important as ever that Congress stand up for small business owners and ensure that a recovery includes further funding to help small businesses build back better.

There is no doubt that small businesses continue to face significant challenges as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. One recent survey noted that, despite improving economic conditions, 1 in 4 small business owners still believe their business may not survive an additional three months without more relief funding or other market shifts¹. Other small businesses also face other, unique costs in this reemergence—the costs of starting their business. A recent survey of nearly 1,200 women business owners found that minority women currently represent almost half of all women business owners who have started a new enterprise in the past year, and those respondents were twice as likely to indicate that they did so out of necessity or facing financial hardship².

Congress should continue to provide help to these small businesses—particularly those owned by women and minority-entrepreneurs. The same survey of women business owners noted above also found that more than half of respondents deemed future access to government relief as “paramount” for maintaining business operations³. Yet many may have been largely shut out of previous rounds of relief. As has been well documented, the program’s initial rollout in 2020, which relied heavily on pre-existing banking relationships with major financial institutions, left

¹ <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/survey-1-in-4-small-businesses-facing-closure>

² <https://gusto.com/company-news/who-started-businesses-during-the-pandemic-a-survey-of-women-starting-businesses-during-covid>

³ <https://gusto.com/company-news/who-started-businesses-during-the-pandemic-a-survey-of-women-starting-businesses-during-covid>

many small business owners in communities of color with delayed processing of applications, relief at below the requested level or high rates of denial⁴.

Those challenges are represented across the economy, but they are also acutely felt within specific industries. For instance, more than 2,900 restaurant owners who applied for relief through the Restaurant Revitalization Fund have been completely shut out of relief Congress intended to provide, through no fault of their own⁵. These are restaurant owners who applied during the priority window meant to provide assistance and prioritization to women-, minority-, and Veteran-small business owners. The outcome these particular business owners face is unconscionable, and Congress and the Small Business Administration should use every lever possible to ensure adequate relief for them. There are even more restaurant owners who have been shut out altogether, and I also continue to hear stories of ongoing challenges in other industries, such as the fitness sector—which saw nearly one-fifth of its businesses shutter during the pandemic. I know these challenges are felt not just in isolated industries, but across the small business sector of our economy.

I know you share my commitment to advancing equity and helping our Nation’s small businesses build back better as we move forward. Small businesses are a lifeline for our communities, and as we seek to rebuild our economy from the wreckage of COVID-19, I sincerely believe we must continue our efforts to support small businesses.

I stand ready to work with you in any capacity to ensure more small business relief is provided to help this critical sector within our economy. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

⁴ <https://www.sbc.senate.gov/public/cache/files/1/0/10733234-b3cd-4251-b1b2-9f9afb40428e/BFDC11B7B14E0662C75F14AA2683CAAE.williams-testimony.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.eater.com/22554719/restaurant-revitalization-fund-lawsuits-halt-sba-grants-women-minority-owned-business>