

United States Senate

March 4, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

The Honorable Jovita Carranza
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration
409 3rd Street SW
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Administrator Carranza:

The community spread of the highly contagious severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (COVID-19) is a significant and growing public health threat. The United States Government must begin preparing to significantly increase efforts to provide financial assistance to businesses harmed as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

This is particularly important for small businesses who lack the capital reserves and human resources to weather and respond to sudden, severe and sustained downturn due to a disease outbreak or pandemic. The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is the Federal agency authorized and prepared to provide disaster and non-disaster loans to small business suffering from the negative economic impacts from the advancing community spread of COVID-19.

Public reports indicate that public fears over COVID-19 have resulted in disproportionate harm to certain small business interests, particularly Chinese restaurants and other Asian-American Pacific Islander (AAPI)-owned small businesses that are suffering from declining foot traffic and sales. In a February 13, 2020 article, the Chicago Tribune reported that the City of Chicago's Chinatown was suffering a decline in business, "... with customers staying away in droves, leaving some restaurants and businesses nearly empty during lunchtime this week." Such reports are not unique to Illinois.

The forthcoming emergency COVID-19 supplemental funding package will likely address SBA disaster assistance loans. Accordingly, in advance of passage of the emergency supplemental, should President Trump make a presidential disaster declaration, I request that SBA establish a COVID-19 Task Force to make sure assistance is effectively and efficiently delivered to small businesses by:

1. Prioritizing outreach and education to disproportionately affected small business communities to build awareness of the availability of relevant SBA disaster loans, such as Economic Injury Disaster Loans, that can help mitigate against lost sales resulting from a disease outbreak;

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2. Conducting proactive outreach, in coordination with SBA's broad network of SBA-affiliated resources partners, to identify and help eligible small businesses successfully apply for SBA disaster loans;
3. Direct additional financial assistance to Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers and other SBA resource providers using authority under the RISE After Disaster Act of 2015 (Public Law 114-88); and
4. Partnering with local chambers of commerce, business incubators and other community organizations to deliver and disseminate information on SBA assistance directly to storefronts in the most hard-hit small business communities.

A whole-of-government approach is critical to making sure our Nation is prepared to address every aspect of the COVID-19 public health emergency. I appreciate SBA's leadership in delivering timely assistance to suffering small businesses, and thank you in advance for your consideration of my urgent request.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator