

October 24, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Chair
Senate Committee on Small Business and
Entrepreneurship
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Joni Ernst
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Small Business and
Entrepreneurship
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Roger Williams
Chair
House Committee on Small Business
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nydia Velazquez
Ranking Member
House Committee on Small Business
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Schumer, Chairs Murray, Shaheen, Cole, Williams and Ranking Members Collins, Ernst, DeLauro, and Velazquez:

We, the undersigned organizations representing small businesses across the United States, are writing to express our profound concern following the recent announcement by the Small Business Administration (SBA) that funding for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program has been exhausted in the aftermath of Hurricanes Helene and Milton. This critical program provides low-interest loans to businesses that have suffered substantial economic injury due to disasters, and it has become a key element in helping small businesses recover and rebuild in times of crisis.

The EIDL program, which provides loans of up to \$2 million at 3.75% interest for small businesses and 2.75% for non-profits with repayment terms of up to 30 years, is an essential tool for covering fixed debts, payroll, and other expenses that businesses cannot meet because of disaster-related disruptions. For countless small businesses—especially those in areas disproportionately affected by natural disasters—this program is their only source of affordable and flexible financial assistance to avoid closure.

Critical Need for Immediate EIDL Funding Replenishment

We urge Congress to act with urgency to refill the EIDL program and ensure that the SBA has the resources necessary to meet the high demand for assistance. The economic impact of delayed recovery cannot be understated. Small businesses in hurricane-affected regions are struggling to stay afloat while waiting for relief, and many cannot survive without the immediate restoration of EIDL funds. The risk of permanent closures is rising with every passing day, threatening local economies, jobs, and the livelihoods of millions of Americans.

The Role of Trusted Partners

As part of the broader effort to ensure the EIDL program is fully utilized, we urge Congress and the SBA to leverage existing networks that are well-positioned to increase visibility and expand access to disaster relief funds. Women’s Business Centers (WBCs), Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), SCORE, and Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs) are invaluable resources with deep community ties. They can play a critical role in raising awareness about the EIDL program, educating small business owners about available resources, and guiding them through the application process.

Moreover, organizations with strong connections to underserved and underrepresented communities, such as minority chambers of commerce, should be engaged to ensure that small businesses in these communities are not overlooked. Historically, minority-owned businesses, particularly those in Black, Hispanic, Native American, and immigrant communities, often face barriers in accessing disaster relief programs. By partnering with these organizations, Congress and the SBA can ensure that information about the EIDL program reaches the businesses that need it most and that these businesses receive the support necessary to recover.

Future Preparedness

Additionally, Congress should take steps to prevent such funding lapses from occurring in the future. We encourage legislative measures that would allow for automatic replenishment of the EIDL program when large-scale disasters strike, ensuring that small businesses can rely on timely financial assistance without the risk of funds being exhausted.

Improving Efficiency and Reducing Delays

Finally, we recommend that Congress work with the SBA to streamline the EIDL disbursement process. Recent delays in processing loan applications have compounded the difficulties faced by small businesses trying to recover from disasters. Providing the SBA with the

necessary resources and tools to process applications more efficiently will expedite relief and reduce the likelihood of long-term economic damage.

In conclusion, we urge Congress to act quickly to refill the EIDL loan program and provide essential resources to small businesses in disaster-stricken areas. By leveraging the support of trusted partners—especially those in underserved communities—receive the assistance they need to recover and thrive.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this critical issue. We stand ready to work with you to ensure the swift replenishment of EIDL funding and to improve access for all businesses in need.

Sincerely,

Association of Women's Business Centers (AWBC)
International Franchise Association (IFA)
National Association for the Self-Employed (NASE)
National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO)
NextGen Chamber of Commerce
Small Business Roundtable
Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP)
Women In Toys (WiT)
US Black Chambers, Inc. (USBC)

Cc:

The Honorable Isabella Casillas Guzman, Administrator, Small Business Administration
The Honorable Lael Brainard, Director, National Economic Council