

May 9, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chair Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chair Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member Committee on  
Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Chair Collins, Ranking Member Murray, Chair Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you begin work preparing the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations bills, the Center for Entrepreneurial Equity—a joint venture between Third Way and the National Urban League—urges you to reject the cuts proposed in the Trump Administration’s FY 2026 Request and, instead, keep in mind the hardworking small business owners and entrepreneurs across the United States who are the backbone of our communities.

Specifically, we encourage lawmakers to prioritize small business programs that are proven to expand access to capital, contracting opportunities, and technical assistance. These investments are critical to ensuring American small businesses have ample pathways to success—from your local farmers in Oklahoma to your neighborhood retailers in Maine. By supporting these initiatives, Congress will help revitalize struggling communities, create jobs, and drive long-term economic growth across the nation.

To that end, we encourage Congress to fund the following:

***Financial Services and General Government Requests***

- **\$175 million for SBA’s Small Business Development Centers, along with robust funding for SBA’s Women’s Business Centers and SCORE Program**, which provide low-cost or free advisory services to help small business owners develop and expand their ventures. SBDCs provide one-on-one counseling across all business stages. WBCs support women entrepreneurs with mentorship and financial training. SCORE offers personalized coaching through its network of expert business mentors. Starting or scaling your business can be complex and these programs offer individualized assistance.
- **\$4.3 million for SBA’s Empower to Grow Program** to train small, disadvantaged businesses for success in the federal marketplace. Formerly the 7(j) Program, E2G offers expert-led training in areas like contract management and compliance. In 2023, 60% of

## **CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITY**

participants secured federal contracts, and the program exceeded its growth target for award-winning firms by 125%.<sup>1</sup>

- **\$51.7 million for SBA’s Microloan Program**, which provides loans up to \$50,000—averaging \$13,000—to help small businesses and qualifying child care centers start or grow.<sup>2</sup> Delivered through nonprofit intermediaries, this program is a vital resource for entrepreneurs who need smaller-scale capital, as traditional banks typically focus on larger loans for individuals with solid financial profiles.
- **\$44 million for SBA’s Office of Field Operations** to maintain vital support for entrepreneurs through 68 district offices nationwide.<sup>3</sup> These offices deliver over 10,000 educational sessions annually and help connect small businesses to capital—facilitating nearly 76,000 loans in 2023, 70% under \$500,000.<sup>4</sup>
- **\$40 million for Bank Enterprise Award Program**, which provides funding to CDFIs, offers loans and investments to small businesses in struggling areas, and expands financial services in low-income communities. Since FY 2016, it has facilitated \$4.3 billion in direct lending to low-income communities and contributed \$418 million to CDFIs, further amplifying and sustaining their impact.<sup>5</sup>

### *Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Requests*

- **\$70 million for the Minority Business Development Agency** which is the only federal agency solely dedicated to supporting minority business enterprises. MBDA expands MBE access to capital, markets, contracts, and resources through a national network of business centers. In FY23 alone, MBDA helped secure \$1.5 billion in capital and over \$3.8 billion in contract awards for MBEs, with programs like Access to Capital preparing entrepreneurs to successfully apply for financing.<sup>6</sup>
- **\$40.7 million for EDA’s Economic Adjustment Assistance Program** to deliver flexible, strategic funding to regions hit by natural disasters, mass layoffs, or chronic underinvestment—supporting recovery through broadband expansion, business incubators, and local loan funds.

As Congress deliberates on funding for the upcoming fiscal year, it’s crucial that lawmakers support the entrepreneurs who drive economic growth, create jobs, and pave the way for community success. We look forward to working with you to ensure the success of our nation’s small businesses.

Sincerely,

*Imani Augustus*

Imani Augustus

Director, Center for Entrepreneurial Opportunity

Third Way

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Small Business Administration. Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Performance Report. 16 Jan. 2025, p. 47, <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/FY24%20SBA%20APR-2025-0123-508.pdf>. Accessed April 16, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Small Business Administration. "Microloans." *SBA.gov*, <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/microloans>. Accessed 16 Apr. 2025.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Small Business Administration. "Office of Field Operations." *SBA.gov*, 21 Jan. 2025, <https://www.sba.gov/about-sba/sba-locations/headquarters-offices/office-field-operations>. Accessed April 16, 2025.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Small Business Administration. *Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Performance Report*. 16 Jan. 2025, p.69, <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/FY24%20SBA%20APR-2025-0123-508.pdf>. Accessed April 16, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> "Bank Enterprise Award Program." Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, U.S. Department of the Treasury, <https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/programs/bank-enterprise-award>. Accessed April 16, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> Minority Business Development Agency. "Programs." *MBDA.gov*, U.S. Department of Commerce, <https://www.mbda.gov>. Accessed April 21, 2025.