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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2020

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The Honorable Jovita Carranza
Administrator
Small Business Administration
409 Third Street, SW, Suite 7900

Washington, DC 20416

Dear Administrator Carranza,

I am writing to you regarding the Small Business Administration's (SBA) response to the novel coronavirus with the hope that the administration will take immediate steps to improve inefficiencies in getting much-needed resources to impacted communities.

First, I want to thank you for your swift action in declaring an economic disaster for the State of Louisiana following my letter of March 18, 2020. This will undoubtedly serve as a lifeline for countless Louisiana businesses. I want to also acknowledge that the task before you is enormous, and that the SBA has never before experienced the volumes or requests and applications that it is today. You and your entire administration are in our prayers.

It has come to my attention, however, that the process to apply for SBA disaster loan assistance contains many inefficiencies that I respectfully urge you to address as quickly as possible. For example, I have received reports from small business owners that SBA's online application system routinely freezes and crashes, forcing applicants to input the same information multiple times. Additionally, business owners have conveyed to me that SBA is virtually inaccessible via telephone due to long wait times. Moreover, once an application is submitted, business owners can expect to wait for a period of 30-45 days for loans to be disbursed.

These inefficiencies must be addressed, and the wait times must be improved. SBA assistance is a critical component of the federal response to the economic fallout caused by this pandemic. Small businesses throughout the country are counting on these funds to pay their employees, rent, and their creditors.

I would also like to raise to your attention a growing problem with our communities of faith. As I am sure you are aware, social distancing practices have severely disrupted religious gatherings across the country. While minimizing physical contact with others is a necessary action we must take to fight the coronavirus, it has hindered our faith-based response. Many churches in my congressional district employ several staff persons each, and operate much like any other small business. They are also hit extremely hard during these difficult times.

I am deeply concerned that, unlike other non-profit organizations, these houses of worship are currently ineligible to apply for SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loans. I ask that you consider allowing these loans to be available for our faith leaders as quickly as possible so that they may continue to serve the most vulnerable members of our communities and be able to prepare for the intense recovery to come. I merely seek fairness for all non-profits, especially houses of worship.

I understand that some of the problems I raised to you are caused by the sheer demand for SBA's services, and I am hopeful that such heightened demand serves as a reminder of the critically important work you are doing to help millions of people in their time of need. I respectfully ask that you take every action in your existing authorities to address these issues and provide access and relief to applicants as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Johnson" with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mike Johnson
Member of Congress