

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Isabella Casillas Guzman

Administrator

U.S. Small Business Administration

409 3rd St, S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20416

Dear Administrator Guzman:

We write to reiterate our request that the Small Business Administration (SBA) expeditiously review applications for economic assistance to Rhode Island small businesses affected by the closure of the westbound span of the Washington Bridge. We also wish to thank you and your office for the March 25, 2024, status update on the SBA's response to the Washington Bridge closure to date, but as the representatives of constituents who are impacted, we remain concerned that small businesses are struggling to access federal relief in a timely manner.

The closure of the westbound span of the Washington Bridge, a vital transportation artery for our region, has significantly impacted the flow of workers and commuters, which has led to severe challenges for small businesses. Many businesses have experienced disruptions to their workforce and supply chains and increased transportation costs, which have reduced revenue and made it difficult for small business owners and entrepreneurs to keep their doors open. While we appreciate SBA's responsiveness to our original request to make impacted small businesses and nonprofits eligible for low-interest, long-term Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL), as well as the work of the Business Recovery Center SBA opened in East Providence, we continue to hear from small business owners facing lengthy delays in the EIDL application and disbursement process.

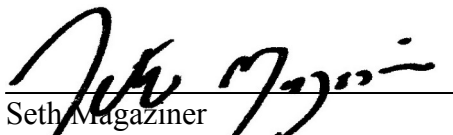
It is our understanding that only approximately 10 percent of loan applications submitted have been approved. To help local businesses better navigate this crisis and make long-term business decisions, we request the following information be provided on a biweekly basis:

1. The total number of loan applications submitted by applicants affected by the Washington Bridge closure.
2. The total number of loans for which SBA has disbursed any amount of funds.
3. The current status of these loan applications, including how many applications are under review, approved, withdrawn or rejected, how much total financial assistance was requested, and how much total financial assistance has been approved.
4. The reasons for rejections by category, such as insufficient documentation, credit issues, delinquency on loans received during the COVID-19 pandemic, or other factors.
5. The average amount of time it takes for an applicant to receive a loan determination from the SBA from the initial date of application.

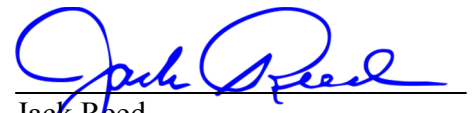
We are grateful for the SBA's ongoing commitment to supporting small businesses. We look forward to collaborating with the SBA to ensure that Rhode Islanders have access to timely and transparent loan decisions.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your prompt response.

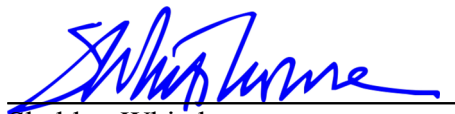
Sincerely,



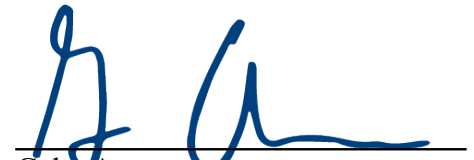
Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



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Member of Congress