



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

January 26, 2022

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Financial Security and Poverty Task Force writes to urge Congress to maintain the small business provisions in Build Back Better, which will benefit individuals with disabilities. CCD's mission is to engage in concerted advocacy for national public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society free from racism, ableism, sexism, and xenophobia, as well as LGBTQ+ based discrimination and religious intolerance; that enhances the civil rights and quality of life of all people with disabilities and their families; and that reflects the values of the Americans with Disabilities Act and all civil rights law.

Both before and during the unprecedented health and financial challenges of COVID-19, individuals with disabilities have used their creative problem solving abilities and talents to open and grow small businesses that advance their economic self-sufficiency and contribute to the economic vitality of communities. In response to the enormous setbacks that small businesses owned by people with disabilities have faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress charged the Small Business Administration (SBA) with the revitalization of America's small businesses including more than two million small businesses owned by people with disabilities. This much-needed support helped countless business owners stay afloat, keep their employees on payroll, and take care of their financial responsibilities. However, the emergency financial assistance programs created also highlighted gaps in our nation's small business ecosystem.

Small business owned by people with disabilities were substantially limited in access to the Payroll Protection Program simply because they did not have strong, preexisting relationships with federally regulated banks. With few options to access the capital they needed to stay in business, many were forced to close with the resulting negative consequences of laying off employees and putting their families at greater financial risk. Congress has an opportunity to address these systemic problems with the Build Back Better agenda. The small business provisions could have a historic impact and provide a truly fair opportunity to the entrepreneurs and small businesses who employ half of our country's labor force and who have, for too long, been a part of an uneven playing field.

We are particularly supportive of the Uplift Incubator provision, which will empower small business creation and expansion in underrepresented communities with specific inclusion of a target audience being entrepreneurs and small business owners with disabilities. These incubators will provide needed training, technical assistance, and financial resources for low- and moderate-income (LMI) communities that will accelerate business recovery efforts and allow them to compete in a fair economy. These technical assistance centers will create a critical pipeline of future business owners and entrepreneurs with disabilities by being responsive to the accessibility needs and unique cultural sensitivities of individuals with disabilities who are also at the intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender.

We are also supportive of the provision establishing an Office of Emerging Markets which specifically enumerates small businesses owned and controlled by individuals with a disability as an emerging market; the inclusion of a disability definition in the Growth Accelerator Competition Provision; the inclusion of small business concerns owned and controlled by an individual with a disability as a covered investment in the Emerging Managers Program provision; and the inclusion of small businesses owned and controlled by an individual with a disability in the Community Advantage Loan Program.

We thank you for your efforts to support America's disability-owned businesses and again urge you to maintain these provisions in Build Back Better. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Michael Morris at mmorris@ndi-inc.org or Cyrus Huncharek at cyrus.huncharek@ndrn.org.

Sincerely,

Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Disability Institute
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
Paralyzed Veterans of America
RespectAbility
The Arc of the United States

CC:

Senator Ben Cardin, Chair, Senate Small Business Committee

Senator Ron Paul, Ranking Member, Senate Small Business Committee

Representative Nydia M. Velázquez, Chair, House Small Business Committee

Representative Blaine Luetkemeyer, Ranking Member, House Small Business Committee