

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 13, 2021

The Honorable Ben Cardin  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Small Business  
428A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rand Paul  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Small Business  
428A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cardin and Ranking Member Paul,

We write today to request a hearing in the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship to conduct oversight of the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Shuttered Venue Operator Grant (SVOG) Program.

When Congress passed the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act in December 2020, more than \$16 billion in grants to shuttered venues were included in the form of the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant program. Through SVOG, eligible entities could qualify for grants equal to 45% of their gross earned revenue, with a maximum award amount of \$10 million available. This was welcome news to many theaters, music halls, museums and other live venue operators whose businesses were devastated by forced closures, stay-at-home orders, and other regulations meant to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Despite Congress providing these much-needed funds in December to SBA, the agency has struggled to quickly implement the program and disburse this emergency relief. The agency first announced launch of the program in early April 2021, however within hours of the application portal going live it was taken offline to address widespread issues. It took approximately two weeks for the agency to address and resolve the portal's issues, and another month before SBA began making awards to qualified businesses.

It has now been nearly two months since the second launch of the program and six months since Congress appropriated funds for the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, and SBA has disbursed only a fraction of awards to pending applicants. Furthermore, we're hearing from frustrated business owners who are struggling to navigate confusing and conflicting guidance issued by the agency, further slowing down an already sluggish processing of applications. While we applaud the steps being taken to ensure that only eligible entities receive assistance, SBA's lack of communication with grant applicants, failure to provide timely technical assistance, and lack of urgency in disbursing emergency funds has made the process overly burdensome for constituents who have been waiting for this assistance since December.

The Small Business Administration was created to assist small business owners and entrepreneurs. However, the roadblocks put in place by the agency hinder eligible small businesses from getting the relief they need through the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant program. This program was meant to be a lifeline, but with each passing day, eligible businesses

are forced to reevaluate decisions to bring staff back to work, choose between making utility payments or payroll on time, or potentially face the decision to close their doors permanently.

We respectfully request that the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship hold a hearing on the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant program, so that we can better understand how the Administration is working to address ongoing issues, manage constituent communications, and expeditiously disburse this much-needed assistance to hurting small businesses.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Roger Marshall, M.D.  
United States Senator



James Risch  
United States Senator



Josh Hawley  
United States Senator



Todd Young  
United States Senator



Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



Tim Scott  
United States Senator



John Kennedy  
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator