



To: Greater Philadelphia's local, state, and federal legislators and government officials  
Re: Acute Challenges and Needs of the Small Business Community, and their Ideas for Solutions  
From: Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia (SBN)  
Contact: Anna Shipp, Executive Director  
Email: [anna@sbnphiladelphia.org](mailto:anna@sbnphiladelphia.org)  
Phone: 215.922.7400 ext. 101 (o) | 215.605.1824 (c)

March 30, 2020

As you know, the small business community is the backbone of our economy. Research consistently shows that thriving independent business communities are linked to higher incomes, less economic inequality, more tax revenues, stronger community cohesion and wellbeing, and improved environmental sustainability. In Pennsylvania, small businesses represent 99.6% of all private sector employers. Nearly half of all workers in the state are employed by a small business.

**SBN knows you are working around the clock on ways to minimize short- and long-term economic damage from the coronavirus pandemic. And we thank you. We write this letter to reaffirm our partnership with you, offer ideas from the small business community, and invite an open dialogue as you rapidly explore legislative and administrative interventions.**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, SBN has remained in close contact with our membership, all socially and environmentally responsible independent businesses based in Greater Philadelphia. They are deeply concerned for their businesses, their employees, and vulnerable communities. As always, they have smart ideas for what would help, which we offer below. **Please reach out to SBN to talk more about these ideas, and to connect directly with our small business members.**

1. Small businesses are eager for financial relief, and low-to-no interest loans will indeed help. However, many small businesses are already in debt and their owners are deeply concerned about taking on more debt. A loan structure also assumes that the business owner has collateral to offer; many business owners, especially those from historically marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds, have limited collateral. **Our City, State, and Federal governments need to ensure that all financial stabilization and recovery packages prioritize small businesses, provide small businesses with grants and not just loans, and address institutionalized discrimination** by providing substantive resources for businesses owned by members of historically marginalized and underrepresented communities. **Additionally, insurance companies should cover standard 'business interruption insurance' for the pandemic.**
2. Small businesses are in desperate need of ways to hold on to cash to keep operations running and keep people employed.
  - a. Small businesses, especially those mandated to stay closed, are facing brutal choices of paying bills or their employees. A **temporary moratorium on commercial evictions coupled with commercial rent deferment**, would allow small businesses to reallocate these critical dollars to keep operations going and people employed. Related, **allowance for debt restructuring and temporary deferment of all debt collections** would effectively deliver immediate cash to small businesses.
  - b. **Expansion and replication of Philadelphia's unique sustainable business tax credit** would provide additional financial support to socially and environmentally responsible small businesses.



3. Small businesses that rely upon revenue from government contracts or on government departments to review and approve private sector have been getting mixed messages about which government workers are or are not working remotely, and which contracts are on hold. This creates uncertainty around project approvals as well as payments, both of which are critical for their cash flow and continued operations. To the fullest extent possible, **government projects, as well as City and State project reviews, approvals, payment processing, should continue in order to ensure that those businesses that are able to continue operations can do so.** Government operations are a crucial element of economic stability and recovery.
  
4. The economic projections of a global recession, combined with dire climate projections and increasing social and economic inequity, demand significant stimulus packages and policy changes to drive an equitable and climate resilient economic recovery. **Significant resources must be allocated to climate resilient infrastructure**, such as renewable energy, transportation system investments that minimize greenhouse gas emissions, and nature-based stormwater management; **as well as to the growth of small businesses**, especially those owned by members of historically marginalized and underrepresented communities. The opportunity this crisis presents to make bold changes must not be wasted.

To date, we are pleased to have seen action on the following prior recommendations SBN has made:

1. Extend city, state, and federal tax filing and payment deadlines
2. Pennsylvania was named a disaster area so that small businesses across the state can now access emergency SBA financing

Thank you in advance for fully responding to the needs of the small business community, and for using the historic opportunity this crisis presents to build a thriving, equitable, and climate resilient economy.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'AS', is positioned above the typed name of the signatory.

Anna Shipp  
Executive Director  
Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia