April 27, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Chairman
Senate Committee on Small Business
and Entrepreneurship

The Honorable Ben Cardin
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Rubio, and Ranking Member Cardin:

We appreciate your leadership in providing unprecedented resources for American small businesses through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (Public Law 116-136). Unfortunately, local trade and professional associations organized under § 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code are ineligible for assistance through the lending programs included in this legislation. Given the crucial role these organizations play in sustaining the Main Street economy, and the severe financial difficulties they are confronting, we strongly support their inclusion in the next round of federal aid for coronavirus relief.

Organizations structured under 501(c)(6) bring the community together to help negotiate shared challenges and promote local economic development. These entities include regional chambers of commerce, nursing professional organizations, state CPA societies, state restaurant associations, and tourism and hospitality leagues, among others. At this exceptionally difficult time, they are providing critical guidance and resources to help small businesses weather the current economic downturn. Unfortunately, just like the small businesses they serve, many of these community leaders are now experiencing their own financial challenges. If these organizations are unable to survive, the path to recovery for our hard-hit Main Street economy will be even more difficult.

To help local 501(c)(6)s meet their current obligations and continue assisting small businesses in our communities, we endorse expanding access to the Paycheck Protection Program in forthcoming legislation. These organizations require revenue beyond annual member dues to make ends meet. As conferences and education events are postponed or cancelled, and contributions become uncertain, finding funds to continue operations and maintain payroll is an increasingly dire issue.
Again, we believe the CARES Act will make a significant positive difference in our communities. However, to ensure that local chambers of commerce and other 501(c)(6) organizations can continue to support small businesses at this precarious moment for our country, they need our help. We look forward to working together with you to address this matter in future legislation.

We are grateful for your attention to this request and appreciate your diligent and committed work during this crisis.

Sincerely,

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
U.S. Senator

Joe Manchin III
U.S. Senator

Also signed by the following members of the U.S. Senate:

Richard Burr
Steve Daines
John Cornyn
Tim Scott
Thom Tillis
Martha McSally
John Boozman
James Lankford
Doug Jones
Kyrsten Sinema
Angus King, Jr.
Gary Peters
Robert Menendez
Jacky Rosen
Jon Tester
Debbie Stabenow