



January 28, 2026

The Honorable John Thune  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senate Majority Leader Thune and Senate Minority Leader Schumer:

As a leading representative of America's 36 million small businesses, Small Business Majority urges the Senate to prioritize efforts to avert a partial shutdown impacting key small business programs ahead of the January 30<sup>th</sup> deadline while also taking the necessary time to address the immigration enforcement crisis that is hurting small businesses, our economy and our nation as a whole.

We have remained in support of key provisions that have passed the House in H.R.7148 including more than \$1.3 billion in funding for small business support programs at a time when small businesses are struggling with tariffs, inflation, the growing cost of healthcare and broad economic uncertainty. While we are encouraged that lawmakers worked to recommend funding levels to key programs like those at the Small Business Administration, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of the Treasury at levels far above those included in the White House's budget request to Congress, that progress and bipartisan commitment to supporting entrepreneurs faces the unnecessary risk of another shutdown in light of the crisis regarding violent immigration enforcement efforts under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The impetus for gridlock around DHS provisions is indeed grave, and merits serious negotiations and action to abate this crisis we face as a nation. As such, the U.S. Senate should separate DHS funding from the other legislation needed to fund federal agencies so that the vast majority of the government can remain up and running while lawmakers negotiate necessary reforms to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations.

**Congress must press on with bipartisan efforts to reform our immigration system to mitigate the harmful impacts being felt around the country while keeping small businesses in mind**

Small business owners remain supportive of ending disruptive and dangerous mass deportation efforts that harm Main Street, while also reforming federal immigration policies to provide pathways to legal status for qualifying undocumented immigrants to bolster an essential small business workforce. Data from our recent national Voice of Main Street Survey found that 47% of small business owners say that increased immigration enforcement has had a negative impact on their business. Roughly 9 in 10 (89%) small businesses supports immigration reform that modernizes the legal immigration system to reduce backlogs and makes it easier for qualified workers to come into the U.S. legally, and the vast majority (87%) also support providing a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers.

Congress must consider not only how to move forward with these critical decisions but how to do so in a way that does not further harm America's small business community. This begins with having more serious conversations about the future of enforcement agencies while keeping key services and agencies open for Main Street.

Lastly, as Congress debates reforms to DHS enforcement policies, which have direct impacts on those we represent, we continue to urge the passage of critical bipartisan bills that would begin to remedy some of the challenges we face in the immigration reform space. This includes The Dignity Act (H.R. 4393) which would strengthen immigration laws in the United States while providing certain undocumented, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipients and Dreamer status holders with temporary status while they obtain legal citizenship to support our economy on Main Street. The Dignity Act would also raise outdated immigration caps and increase availability of high-skilled visas, expand access to talented workers for small businesses in high-skill, manufacturing and agricultural fields. Additional legislation, like the Essential Workers for Economic Advancement Act (H.R. 5494), would create a temporary worker program that is contingent upon U.S. workforce needs as economic conditions change by creating a new H-2C nonimmigrant visa for employers who have roles that remain unfilled for at least three months. These bills represent two bipartisan paths forward that prioritize both the safety of local communities while ensuring small businesses needs are met by our immigration system.

We are hopeful that Congress can come together during this critical time and act in the best interest of not only small businesses, but the entire country. Small businesses are negatively impacted by harsh, chaotic immigration enforcement efforts, and especially those that have recently led to violence and disruption in our communities. When communities suffer, Main Street is harmed first, as evidenced by real experiences documented throughout our network of business owners across the country. Below is a sample of feedback we've received from small business owners in our network.

#### **A small business owner in Milwaukee, WI**

*"We've seen a significant shift in our clients' trust and willingness to engage—particularly during this last tax season. Many of our clients are now afraid to file their tax returns, fearing that the same government agencies they've trusted for years may now share their information with immigration enforcement. Over 200 of our clients chose not to file this year out of fear.*

*I also hear from the small business owners we serve—especially in construction and the restaurant industry—who are struggling to retain staff. Workers are being targeted while driving, often pulled over and asked for identification. Transportation has become a major issue, and business owners are having to get creative just to keep their operations running.*

*In our office, we provide a lot of free services to support our immigrant community—translations, writing letters, referrals to attorneys, and more. But it's clear that fear is taking a toll, both mentally and physically. I witnessed one of our clients go to what was supposed to be a routine immigration appointment, only to be deported shortly after. His wife and two daughters have now relocated to Mexico. It was devastating. We need real, humane policy solutions that reflect the reality of what our communities are facing every day."*

#### **A small business owner in Phoenix, AZ**

*"We're facing significant challenges due to the current economic conditions, changes in immigration policies and heightened enforcement activities in our area. My primary clients are from the Latino community, particularly families celebrating Quinceañeras—a beautiful, culturally important tradition. When I started this business, I believed that by our second year we would be able to grow steadily, capture more business, create more jobs, and contribute even more to our community.*

*Unfortunately, that has not been the case. The combination of a struggling economy, increased fear in the community due to immigration enforcement and ICE presence, and tighter financial conditions have severely impacted my ability to attract and retain clients. Many families are either postponing or canceling events altogether out of fear and financial stress.*

*This situation has turned into my worst nightmare. Instead of growing, my business is struggling just to stay afloat. If conditions do not improve soon, I am afraid I may lose everything—including over 20 years of retirement savings—I have worked so hard to build and the opportunity to continue*

*...serving my community and providing jobs here. I'm exploring all possible solutions to keep my business open and to continue serving the families who count on us to help celebrate their most meaningful moments."*

**A small business owner in Los Angeles, CA**

*"The ICE raids and mass deportation threats scare the working families that use my daycare. They're afraid to come, and my staff also is under a lot of stress. I'm afraid that this will impact my ability to remain open."*

**A small business owner in Philadelphia, PA**

*"As a small, immigrant- and woman-led business that helps train and hire Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), we've felt the impact of the current immigration climate on every level—from worker anxiety to outright loss of workforce."*

*Since the beginning of this year, our Haitian trainees—many of whom entered through the CHNV parole program—have been telling us they're scared to leave their homes. Even before the program was canceled, there was growing fear of ICE presence in immigrant neighborhoods. That fear only intensified with the rollback, leaving many of our trainees suddenly ineligible for employment after we invested months helping them study for and pass their CNA exams."*

*This is not just bad for our workers—it's hurting the entire care industry. Nursing homes are short-staffed and elders go without stable caregivers. Small businesses like mine are forced to rethink their entire business models in response to unpredictable federal policy."*

**A small business owner in San Diego, CA**

*"My clients and students are afraid to walk the street because they could be at risk of deportation even though they're a citizen."*

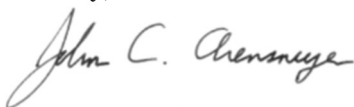
**A small business owner in Fresno, CA**

*"The recent immigration raids are impacting our community: We rely heavily on agriculture and immigrant labor. While my business is not related to agriculture, many of my customers' primary income is from that sector."*

*We also work directly with many nonprofits that have put their orders on hold as they pivot to helping our most at risk population. We have put some of our events on hold as it's unsafe for authors to travel to our city given the high level of ICE activity here. Events help us hit our monthly sales goals, and having to cancel two of our events during one of our busiest months is really impacting our cash flow."*

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. Should you have any questions, please contact Alexis D'Amato, our Government Affairs Director, at [adamato@smallbusinessmajority.org](mailto:adamato@smallbusinessmajority.org).

Sincerely,



John Arensmeyer  
Founder & CEO  
Small Business Majority