



November 18, 2019

Chairwoman Nydia Velázquez
U.S. House Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Congressman Hakeem Jeffries
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: H.R. 5065 and H.R. 5078

Dear Chairwoman Velázquez and Congressman Jeffries:

As a representative of the 30 million small businesses in America, Small Business Majority writes today to express our support for H.R. 5065 and H.R. 5078, which would direct the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to provide mentoring and training to federal inmates, both in-prison and post-release, to prepare incarcerated individuals and returning citizens for entrepreneurship.

Small Business Majority is a national small business advocacy organization, founded and run by small business owners to ensure America's entrepreneurs are a key part of a thriving and inclusive economy. A key component of our work involves outreach and education to small business owners on key small business issues, including access to capital and business support services, healthcare and more.

It's no secret that one of the primary drivers of high recidivism rates is the inability for returning citizens to find a job—an estimated 60% of ex-offenders remain unemployed one year after their release. Entrepreneurial development programs for formerly incarcerated individuals report dramatically lower rates of recidivism, and self-employment can provide economic stability for those who are otherwise locked out of the labor market.

Returning citizens are often eager to contribute to their communities and to achieve financial independence. By extending support through entrepreneurial development programs such as SCORE, Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and the Women's Business Centers (WBCs) to current and formerly incarcerated individuals, we can help those who are often shut out of the labor market create their own jobs by starting small businesses, which will benefit our economy overall.

In particular, this legislation would promote entrepreneurship for returning citizens by allowing federal inmates to become eligible for intensive, in-depth classroom instruction combined with one-on-one mentoring. The SBDCs and WBCs would be responsible for providing counseling in federal prisons, while SCORE would provide formerly incarcerated individuals with mentoring, workshops and online instruction specifically tailored to their unique needs.

When returning citizens come home after paying their debt to society, we must equip them with the tools they need to rebuild their lives, including opportunities for entrepreneurship. In turn, these citizens will be able to launch businesses that not only provide them with income, but also generate economic prosperity community-wide. As such, we strongly support both H.R. 5065 and H.R. 5078, which will give returning citizens another tool in their reentry toolkit and promote entrepreneurship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. Arensmeyer". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light gray rectangular background.

John C. Arensmeyer
Founder & CEO