

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 17, 2019

The Honorable John Kennedy  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Financial Services  
and General Government  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Coons  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Financial Services  
and General Government  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Coons:

We are writing to express our strong support for the State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) grant program at the Small Business Administration. As you begin work on the fiscal year 2020 appropriations bill for Financial Services and General Government, we respectfully request your support for increased levels of funding for the STEP program.

The STEP program was originally created in the *Small Business Jobs Act of 2010* (P.L. 111-240) and provides invaluable support to small businesses. STEP awards competitive grants to states and territories in an effort to increase the number of small businesses offering their products overseas. States then match a portion of these grants and award funds to small businesses. By lowering some of the barriers to exporting, the program has helped increase the number of U.S. small businesses that are selling their products overseas and the value of their exports. According to the Small Business Administration, the STEP grant program yielded over \$300 million in export sales for a return on federal taxpayer investment of nearly 38:1. Through this program, small businesses around the country have been able to expand their markets, grow their businesses and create new jobs.

Recognizing the success of this program and the importance of ensuring that small businesses have access to foreign markets, Congress authorized STEP through 2020 at \$30 million per fiscal year as part of the *Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015* (P.L. 114-125). We strongly believe that the enactment of this authorization demonstrates Congress' commitment to the STEP grant program and support for increased levels of funding.

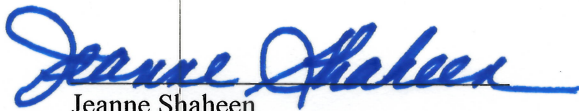
Exports play a critical role in our economy. The Department of Commerce reports that exports accounted for one-fourth of overall economic growth since 2009 and supported 11.5 million American jobs in 2015. Despite the enormous potential of exporting, only 300,000 of the 28 million small businesses in the United States utilize international markets and export their products. With 95 percent of potential consumers living outside our borders, we are missing out on opportunities to expand our economy and support our small businesses. The STEP grant program helps bridge this gap and ensure that small businesses are able to benefit from growing markets abroad.

As you know, we support reducing our federal deficits and debt, and maintaining sound, effective budget discipline. We understand the serious budget constraints that face the

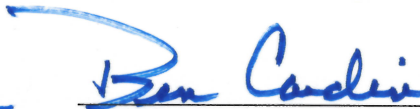
subcommittee and the difficult choices that will need to be made. We know the subcommittee may weigh the effectiveness and efficiency of all programs in its decision process, and we believe the STEP program has proven to be a good investment of taxpayers' dollars and has a demonstrated record of success in helping small business grow and expand their markets overseas. This is why we respectfully request you support increased levels of funding for this program.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

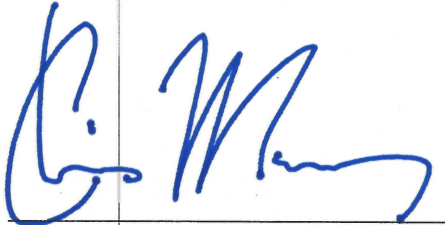
Sincerely,



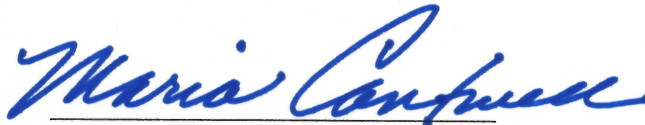
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senate



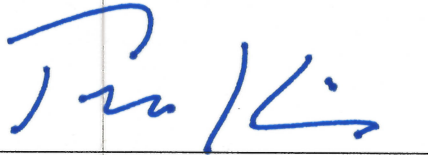
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senate



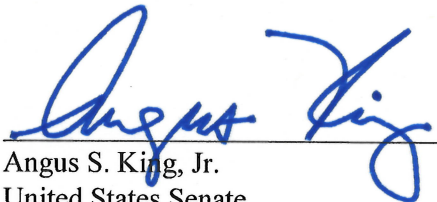
Christopher Murphy  
United States Senate



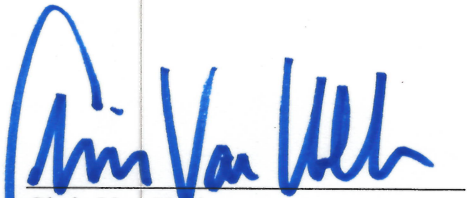
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senate



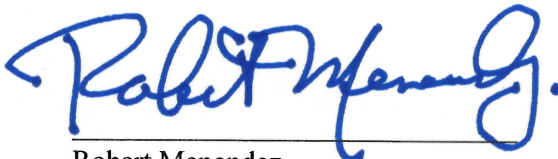
Timothy Kaine  
United States Senate



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senate



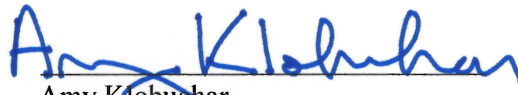
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senate



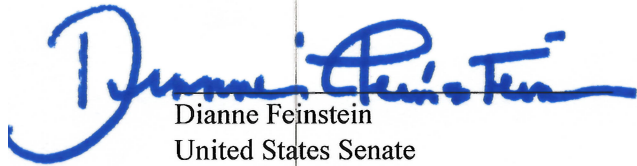
Robert Menendez  
United States Senate



Mazie K. Hirono  
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Amy Klobuchar  
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Dianne Feinstein  
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Mark R. Warner  
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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senate



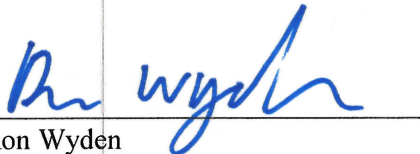
Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senate



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senate



Jack Reed  
United States Senate



Ron Wyden  
United States Senate