



ASSOCIATION OF
WOMEN'S
BUSINESS
CENTERS

September 19, 2019

The Honorable Sharice Davids
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim Hagedorn
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Davids and Hagedorn:

On behalf of the more than 100 organizations that make up the Association of Women's Business Centers (AWBC), I am writing to thank you for your bill, *The Women's Business Centers Improvement Act of 2019* (H.R. 4405), which supports America's women entrepreneurs by modernizing and strengthening the Women's Business Center program. We fully endorse your legislation as it includes key improvements to the program, which will help us serve more of America's 12.3 million female small business owners.

Federal funding allows WBCs to continue the critical work of training, counseling and mentoring women business owners in urban and rural areas alike, and yet, despite the explosive growth of women entrepreneurs over the last three decades, the \$150,000 cap on individual center grants has remained stagnant since the program's launch over 30 years ago and the overall funding for the program has not grown in tandem with the growth of women-owned businesses in the United States. Your bill addresses these two important issues. Lifting the cap to \$300,000 will allow existing centers to expand their reach to more entrepreneurs in need, while an authorization level of \$31.5M will allow for significant growth of the program and the funds to open additional centers.

Your bill further strengthens WBCs by establishing an accreditation program which raises the standards of excellence for training and counseling across centers, providing funds for an annual WBC conference to facilitate the sharing of best practices, and offering flexible and innovative options for the federal match requirement.

Women's Business Centers are focused on being an effective and efficient resource for one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy. Our continued growth leaves an enormous footprint of successful business owners and job creators. We thank you for your support of the WBC program and the many entrepreneurs we serve.

Sincerely,
Corinne Hodges
CEO
Association of Women's Business Centers

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