

November 13, 2023

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chair
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry

The Honorable David Scott, Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable John Boozman, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry

Dear Chairman Thompson, Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Scott, and Ranking Member Boozman:

We, the undersigned organizations, write this letter to express our support for the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Act of 2023, which reauthorizes and outlines important updates to the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP).

RMAP supports the development and ongoing success of rural small businesses across the country. Through the program, loans and grants are made to Microentrepreneur Development Organizations (MDO), which then provide loans and technical assistance to rural microentrepreneurs, defined as a sole proprietorship or having 10 or fewer employees.

In recent years, rural small business owners and entrepreneurs have faced mounting challenges. In addition to the daily trials of operating a business, loans are difficult to secure and access to essential training is limited. RMAP was designed to meet these needs, however, outdated regulations have kept the program from reaching its full potential. The Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Act, introduced in the House of Representatives by Reps. Zach Nunn and Angie Craig and in the Senate by Sens. Pete Ricketts and Tina Smith, would address these shortfalls. Specifically, it would:

- **Raise the maximum loan size available to entrepreneurs** from \$50,000 to \$75,000 to reflect current economic trends and the needs of microentrepreneurs. The \$50,000 loan cap set by the original legislation is equivalent to nearly \$70,000 today.
- **Provide greater flexibility for microentrepreneurs to renovate their business locations** by modifying the prohibition on new construction to allow for the renovation of existing buildings.

This would allow small business owners a financially expedient path to update and occupy brick-and-mortar locations on rural main streets.

- **Remove unnecessary administrative barriers to lending in rural communities** by allowing MDOs to fully source loans to underserved business owners with RMAP funds. The current requirement states that no more than 75% of a loan be sourced through RMAP.

For decades, small businesses have been the lifeblood of rural communities, and this legislation provides an opportunity for Congress to demonstrate a commitment to their success. Passing this bipartisan, common sense legislation in the next farm bill is one simple action Congress can take that will benefit our rural small businesses, main streets, and communities for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Arkansas

Communities Unlimited, Inc.

Arizona

Nogales Community Development Corporation

Arizona

Verde Valley Regional Economic Organization

California

CAMEO

California

Colusa County Partnership

California

Community Development Services

California

Fruition Sustainability Solutions LLC

California

Kitchen Food Ventures

California

Valley Small Business Development Corporation

Hawaii

Feed The Hunger Fund

Hawaii

Pacific Gateway Center

Illinois

Southern Five Regional Planning District & Development Commission

Iowa

IowaMicroLoan

Kentucky

Community Ventures Corporation

Kentucky

Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation

Maine

Eastern Maine Development Corporation

Maine

Northern Maine Development Commission

Maine

Penquis

Maryland

Maryland Capital Enterprise

Massachusetts

Franklin County Community Development Corporation

Michigan

Northern Initiatives

Minnesota

Southwest Initiative Foundation

Missouri

Green Hills Regional Planning Commission

Montana

Great Northern Development Corporation

Nebraska

Center for Rural Affairs

Nebraska

Native360 Loan Fund

New Mexico

Women's Economic Self-Sufficiency Team, Corp.

New York

Adirondack Economic Development Corporation

New York

Local Initiatives Support Corporation

North Dakota

Lake Agassiz Development Group

Ohio

ACEnet, Inc.

Oregon

Community LendingWorks

Oregon

Oregon Micro Fund

Pennsylvania

JARI Growth Fund, Inc.

Pennsylvania

Lawrence County Economic Development Corporation

Pennsylvania

Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce

South Carolina

Community Works

South Dakota

GROW South Dakota

South Dakota

Neighborhood Lending Services

Tennessee

Three Roots Capital

Vermont

Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation

Vermont

Community Capital of Vermont, Inc.

Virginia

Shenandoah Community Capital Fund

Washington, DC

National NeighborWorks Association

West Virginia

Woodlands Community Lenders

Wisconsin

Community Assets for People, LLC