

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 2, 2018

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration
409 3rd Street, S.W.
Washington DC 20416

Dear Administrator McMahon:

On September 13, 2018, natural gas explosions destroyed and damaged buildings across Lawrence, North Andover, and Andover, Massachusetts. Twenty-five people were injured, one was killed, and thousands of buildings have been left without hot water and heat. Businesses, especially small businesses, continue to face difficulties as they cope with the immediate impacts of this disaster. Given the unique difficulties these communities face, we would like to invite you to join me in touring the affected area and seeing firsthand the devastating impact of this catastrophe on these small businesses.

In the immediate aftermath of the explosions along a Columbia Gas of Massachusetts pipeline, thousands of gas meters in the area were turned off by customers, first responders, or gas company employees. While the majority of these customers have had gas service restored, approximately 7,700 meters remain shut off and these customers will remain without gas until the restoration effort is completed—potentially until November 19, according to the most recent timeline. This includes many small businesses in the area that have already lost customers and income in the aftermath of the explosions.

As the winter months approach, businesses without gas service will be forced to deal with falling temperatures by using inefficient, and often dangerous, electric space heaters just to stay open. They will also have to undertake substantial efforts to repair structural and other damage to their properties. The interruption to business activity caused by that construction work is likely to impact productivity across the entire region for a considerable period of time. Some may be forced to completely shutter altogether.


The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee will be holding a field hearing in the coming weeks in the impacted region to examine the causes and response to the disaster. As representatives from other federal agencies we hope are present to discuss the role of the government in preventing and responding to disasters, the timing would be ideal for you to visit and draw attention to the Small Business Administration's abilities to assist in recovery efforts.

Thank you for your consideration of this invitation. Your presence and insights would be

immensely valuable to the Massachusetts businesses impacted by the disaster, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,


Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator


Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator