

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 22, 2018

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Administrator
Small Business Administration
409 3rd St. SW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Administrator McMahon:

We write to support the approval of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's request for emergency assistance under the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loan program made following the Columbia Gas explosions in the Merrimack Valley communities of Lawrence, North Andover, and Andover, earlier this year that have placed a significant economic hardship on businesses in the region.

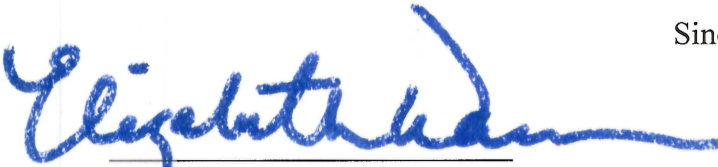
On September 13, 2018, natural gas explosions caused more than 70 fires in the City of Lawrence and towns of Andover and North Andover, Massachusetts. More than twenty-five people were injured in the event with one fatality, 18-year-old Leonel Rondon of Lawrence. Thousands of Merrimack Valley residents and hundreds of businesses have been impacted due to the negligence of Columbia Gas, as they are currently without gas service. In addition to the costs incurred by residents, businesses in the area are faced with the financial burden of loss of revenue in the upcoming months.

Furthermore, these businesses must confront other direct and indirect costs, including employee payroll, and lost tax revenue. The Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce, in coordination with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency has identified almost a thousand businesses impacted by this event and connected owners with available relief programs. The Chamber's president and CEO Joe Bevilacqua illustrated the problems facing the business community stating that the, "impact isn't only on the business owner and the business itself, but the impact is also on the employees who are not able to be at work. So there is a loss of productivity and there is going to be an impact across the Merrimack Valley."¹ This financial uncertainty will continue for many weeks until the officials at Columbia Gas can fully restore gas service, which is projected to occur on a rolling basis until November 19, 2018, according to Columbia Gas.

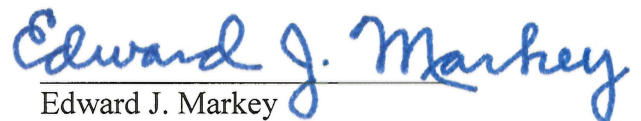
¹ MetroWest Daily News, "Merrimack Valley businesses hit hard by gas explosion disaster," Colin A Young, September 26, 2018, <https://www.metrowestdailynews.com/news/20180920/merrimack-valley-businesses-hit-hard-by-gas-explosion-disaster>

The Small Business Administration's Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program would work to bridge the loss of revenue and help stabilize the local economy. The low-interest loans provided by the EIDL program would greatly impact the revitalization of the region and help business meet operating expenses. The Merrimack Valley community continues to face significant disaster response and recovery costs as they respond to the damage to properties. Federal assistance is critically needed to help the small businesses of the region rebuild and recoup financial losses. We respectfully urge your timely approval of this request and we thank you in advance for your prompt consideration.

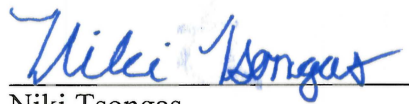
Sincerely,




Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Niki Tsongas
United States Senator



Seth Moulton
United States Senator