

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 25, 2015

The Honorable Maria Contreras-Sweet
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration
409 3rd Street SW, Suite 7000
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Administrator Contreras-Sweet,

Last Congress, we introduced the Women's Small Business Procurement Parity Act to provide a level playing field for women business owners competing for federal contracts. We thank you for your support for this proposal and your help including a nearly identical provision in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 that became law. Today, we write to urge you to swiftly promulgate regulations to implement this provision so that additional opportunities for women-owned small businesses (WOSBs) can be made available across the country.

As you know, WOSBs make up nearly 30 percent of all firms but continue to struggle in the federal contracting environment. Despite efforts by the SBA to increase WOSB contracting, the federal government has yet to meet its goal of awarding five percent of federal contracts to WOSBs. The provision we included in the NDAA eliminates one of the main barriers that prevented federal agencies from achieving that goal. By allowing contracting officers at federal agencies to award sole-source contracts to WOSBs, the provision puts WOSBs on the same playing field as other small business contracting programs.

We believe that sole-source authority has the potential to significantly increase WOSB contracting if implemented quickly. At a Senate Small Business Committee hearing last year, women business owners testified that providing sole-source parity would be an important way for WOSBs to demonstrate their products and services for federal agencies. In addition, prior experience suggests that changes to the program can have a significant impact. When the SBA quickly implemented a statutory change removing caps on award sizes in 2013, the amount of dollars awarded through the WOSB program tripled.

We thank you for your leadership on this issue and your attention to this matter. Please let us know if we can be helpful to you as you implement this important reform.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator