



April 10, 2020

U.S. Small Business Administration
Attn: Jovita Carranza
409 3rd Street, SW.
Washington DC 20416

Dear Administrator Carranza,

I am writing in response to the Small Business Administration's (SBA) recently enacted criminal history guidance for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which denies much-needed relief to small businesses and non-profit organizations who are led by people with past felony convictions. As the leader of an organization, the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC), which is made up and led by individuals with past felony convictions, I am alarmed by the Administration's decision to punish small businesses and nonprofits that are being shut down at this time through no fault of their own. On behalf of our organization, as well as the millions of people with past felony convictions across the country, many of whom own small businesses and nonprofits, we are asking you to immediately change the criteria you are using to provide relief through the Paycheck Protection Program for small businesses and nonprofits led by people with past felony convictions.

On March 27, 2020, President Donald Trump signed the CARES Act into law, authorizing more than \$300 billion for the SBA to implement the PPP. The PPP is an SBA loan program that helps businesses keep their workforce employed during the COVID-19 crisis. It is set up to create direct incentives for employers to keep their workers on the payroll, by agreeing to forgive the loans if employees are kept on the payroll for eight weeks and the money loaned is used for payroll, rent, mortgage interest, or utilities. Small businesses (whether for-profit or non-profit) and employees are clearly the spirit of this legislation and lifeline. Unfortunately, these incentives are not available to businesses led by certain people with past convictions (see the attached regulations). Nearly as concerning is the fact that the guidance on this issue has changed numerous times since the program was implemented weeks ago. Our hope is that instead of continually changing the guidance requirements, you will choose to get rid of these regulations altogether, and focus on supporting all of the people who are trying to keep their businesses running and their employees at work through this crisis.

FRRC is a grassroots, membership organization run by Returning Citizens (Formerly Convicted Persons) who are dedicated to ending the disenfranchisement and discrimination against people with convictions and creating a more comprehensive and humane reentry system that will enhance successful reentry, reduce recidivism, and increase public safety.



The small businesses this program is trying to help did not create this problem. Businesses and nonprofits are being closed and unable to pay their employees through no fault of their own – and no matter what their background. Should these employees and families matter less, because of some mistake that happened in their employers past? We don't think so. Nor do we think people with past convictions who have stepped up to start businesses and nonprofits, or their employees, should be punished more than others because the government needed to shut down the economy to ensure public health. That is why we are writing to encourage you to change your guidelines and treat businesses and nonprofits with owners with past convictions the same way you would treat any other business. The economic health and well being of our country depends on it.

Sincerely,

Desmond Meade
Executive Director
Florida Rights Restoration Coalition

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