



Jared Golden
Congress of the United States
2nd District of Maine

July 8, 2024

The Honorable Isabel Guzman
Administrator
Small Business Administration
409 3rd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Administrator Guzman,

I write to express my concerns about the Small Business Administration's (SBA) ongoing issues servicing emergency disaster loans and the ineffectiveness of the MySBA loan portal. Following a series of major storms that devastated Maine's coastal communities, my constituents are still awaiting their emergency disaster loans.

In December 2023 and again in January 2024 two widespread storms ravaged through Maine, devastating businesses and communities. Shortly after these events, two presidential disaster declarations were signed allowing those affected to access low-interest loans from the SBA for physical and economic injury to ease the financial impacts.

In January 2024, the SBA opened an online portal for disaster loan applications intended to expedite and simplify the process for individuals and businesses dealing with the effects of natural disasters. However, the system has been anything but quick or simple. MySBA has proved not to be user-friendly or designed for businesses at all, resulting in unnecessary delays and increased financial uncertainty for the people and businesses in Maine. In numerous cases, constituent applications were held up, and then withdrawn due to errors in the portal automation utilized in the application.

Furthermore, we've found that information is not properly shared between loan officers and the SBA call center staff, resulting in inaccurate, often conflicting answers to constituent inquiries. In instances where the constituent would like to speak with a supervisor, they are repeatedly denied. In another circumstance, because the portal had malfunctioned a constituent was told to drive more than an hour multiple times to upload necessary paperwork.

I'm concerned that SBA staff, who lack the available resources to fix the issues themselves, are manually overriding the portal to review loan applications, further delaying an already arduous process. Additionally, constituents are experiencing the same issues they had with the SBA's online COVID-19 portal.

Disasters are serious disruptions to a community's operations, including to businesses they rely on. SBA disaster loans are intended to provide resources beyond what the community of businesses can provide. It is not just important, but it is the responsibility of the SBA to provide these loans in a timely, efficient, and predictable manner. Nearly six months after the disaster, these businesses are mired in an inefficient, broken system and may ultimately go out of business without the necessary resources to rebuild from the storms.

With those concerns in mind, I ask you to provide answers to the following:

- Does the SBA have a plan to address the issues with the portal? If so, what steps is the SBA planning to take?
- While we understand that sensitive information may not be shared between loan officers and SBA call center staff, what steps can the SBA take to ensure that loan officers and SBA call center staff are providing accurate, up-to-date information to constituents?
- What steps can SBA take to ensure constituents are given a predictable timeline for a decision on their loan? How does the SBA plan to ensure that if the timeline changes, the constituents are updated as soon as possible?

I ask you and your staff to investigate how the SBA operates these programs and ensure the issues are resolved.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jared F. Golden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jared" and last name "Golden" clearly legible.

Jared Golden
Member of Congress