

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4764

To amend the Small Business Act to enhance the Office of Rural Affairs,
and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 24, 2024

Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Mr. KENNEDY) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Small Business
and Entrepreneurship

A BILL

To amend the Small Business Act to enhance the Office
of Rural Affairs, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Coordinated Support
5 for Rural Small Businesses Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. OFFICE OF RURAL AFFAIRS OF THE SMALL BUSI-**
7 **NESS ADMINISTRATION.**

8 Section 26 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 653)
9 is amended—

1 (1) by redesignating subsections (a), (b), and
2 (c) as subsections (b), (c), and (d), respectively;

3 (2) by inserting before subsection (b) the fol-
4 lowing:

5 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

6 “(1) ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR.—The term
7 ‘Assistant Administrator’ means the Assistant Ad-
8 ministrators of the Office.

9 “(2) HUBZONE.—The term ‘HUBZone’ has the
10 meaning given the term in section 31(b).

11 “(3) OFFICE.—The term ‘Office’ means the Of-
12 fice of Rural Affairs established under subsection
13 (b).

14 “(4) RESOURCE PARTNERS.—The term ‘re-
15 source partners’ means—

16 “(A) small business development centers;

17 “(B) women’s business centers described in
18 section 29;

19 “(C) chapters of the Service Corps of Re-
20 tired Executives established under section
21 8(b)(1)(B); and

22 “(D) Veteran Business Outreach Centers
23 described in section 32.

1 “(5) RURAL SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN.—The
 2 term ‘rural small business concern’ means a small
 3 business concern located in a rural area.”;

4 (3) in subsection (b), as so redesignated—

5 (A) by inserting “ESTABLISHMENT.—” be-
 6 fore “There”; and

7 (B) by striking “(hereafter in this section
 8 referred to as the ‘Office’)”;

9 (4) by amending subsection (c), as so redesign-
 10 ated, to read as follows:

11 “(c) APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT ADMINIS-
 12 TRATOR.—

13 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Office shall be admin-
 14 istered by an Assistant Administrator, who shall be
 15 an employee in the competitive service.

16 “(2) QUALIFICATIONS.—The Assistant Admin-
 17 istrator shall—

18 “(A) have education or professional experi-
 19 ence with, or knowledge of, rural affairs and
 20 issues relating to small business concerns; and

21 “(B) have experience providing develop-
 22 ment assistance to rural small business con-
 23 cerns.”;

24 (5) in subsection (d), as so redesignated—

1 (A) in the matter preceding paragraph (1),
2 by inserting “DUTIES.—” before “The”;

3 (B) in paragraph (1), by striking “small
4 business concerns located in rural areas” and
5 inserting “rural small business concerns”;

6 (C) by amending paragraph (3) to read as
7 follows:

8 “(3) promote the policies and programs of the
9 Administration and of other Federal departments
10 and agencies for assisting rural small business con-
11 cerns to industries, organizations, and State and
12 local governments;”;

13 (D) in paragraph (4), by striking “; and”
14 and inserting a semicolon;

15 (E) in paragraph (5)—

16 (i) by striking “the United States
17 Tourism and Travel Administration” and
18 inserting “the National Travel and Tour-
19 ism Office of the Department of Com-
20 merce”;

21 (ii) by striking “small businesses in
22 rural areas” and inserting “rural small
23 business concerns”; and

24 (iii) by striking the period at the end
25 and inserting “; and”; and

1 (F) by adding at the end the following:

2 “(6) host webinars and outreach events for
3 rural small business concerns as described in sub-
4 section (e).”; and

5 (6) by adding at the end the following:

6 “(e) OUTREACH.—The Assistant Administrator
7 shall—

8 “(1) host webinars and outreach events in var-
9 ious regions of the United States for rural small
10 business concerns; and

11 “(2) invite representatives from district offices
12 of the Administration, resource partners, Federal
13 and State agencies, and other interested persons to
14 participate in the webinars and outreach events de-
15 scribed in paragraph (1).

16 “(f) INTERAGENCY COOPERATION.—The Assistant
17 Administrator shall coordinate with the Department of
18 Agriculture to—

19 “(1) conduct outreach regarding programs of
20 the Administration and the Department of Agri-
21 culture and to improve awareness and utilization of
22 the existing programs and services of each agency;
23 and

24 “(2) convene interagency working groups to ad-
25 dress issues including—

1 “(A) capital access and investment in rural
2 areas of the United States, which may in-
3 clude—

4 “(i) identifying synergies between the
5 business loan programs of the Administra-
6 tion and the Department of Agriculture,
7 including where intermediaries, such as
8 those under the microloan program under
9 section 7(m), as defined in paragraph (11)
10 of such section, and the rural microentre-
11 preneur assistance program established
12 under section 379E of the Consolidated
13 Farm and Rural Development Act (7
14 U.S.C. 2008s) and the intermediary re-
15 lending program established under section
16 310H of that Act (7 U.S.C. 1936b), may
17 be able to participate in programs at both
18 agencies;

19 “(ii) assessing opportunities for the
20 Administration to facilitate the delivery of
21 programs of the Department of Agriculture
22 to rural communities through the district
23 offices of the Administration, relationships
24 with rural lenders, resource partners of the
25 Administration, and joint outreach and

1 marketing efforts, as well as opportunities
2 for the Department of Agriculture to facili-
3 tate the delivery of programs of the Ad-
4 ministration to rural communities;

5 “(iii) improving information sharing
6 and discussion of best practices between
7 the Administration and the Department of
8 Agriculture;

9 “(iv) examining coordination between
10 the small business investment company
11 program under part A of title III of the
12 Small Business Investment Act of 1958
13 (15 U.S.C. 681 et seq.) and related pro-
14 grams at the Department of Agriculture,
15 including the Rural Business Investment
16 Program of the Department of Agriculture;

17 “(v) examining opportunities for co-
18 ordination between the Administration, the
19 Department of Agriculture, and commu-
20 nity and nonprofit partners in the small
21 business ecosystem, including resource
22 partners, Regional Food Business Centers,
23 and innovation clusters; and

24 “(vi) addressing barriers and exam-
25 ining opportunities for cooperatives to par-

1 ticipate in programs and access resources
 2 of the Administration that are similar to
 3 the financing programs of the Department
 4 of Agriculture that serve cooperatives; and
 5 “(B) assisting businesses in rural areas of
 6 the United States, which may include—

7 “(i) identifying overlap among the
 8 rural markets identified by the Depart-
 9 ment of Agriculture, HUBZones, rural
 10 census tracts identified by the Administra-
 11 tion, and underserved rural communities;

12 “(ii) exploring opportunities to sup-
 13 port innovation clusters in rural areas;

14 “(iii) coordinating effective support
 15 initiatives that benefit Native Americans;
 16 and

17 “(iv) collaborating on technical assist-
 18 ance, especially with respect to exportation
 19 and procurement.

20 “(g) REPORT.—

21 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
 22 after the date of enactment of this subsection, and
 23 annually thereafter, the Administrator shall submit
 24 to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepre-
 25 neurship of the Senate and the Committee on Small

1 Business of the House of Representatives, and make
2 publicly make available on a website of the Adminis-
3 tration, a report on the activities of the Office dur-
4 ing the 1-year period immediately preceding the date
5 of submission of the report.

6 “(2) CONTENTS.—Each report required under
7 paragraph (1) shall include the following:

8 “(A) The operational details of the Office,
9 including the name of the Assistant Adminis-
10 trator, the budget of the Office, and the num-
11 ber of full-time employees employed by or de-
12 tailed to the Office.

13 “(B) A summary of the activities con-
14 ducted under subsection (d).

15 “(C) The number of webinars and out-
16 reach events conducted by the Administration
17 to promote policies and programs and provide
18 information described in paragraphs (3) and
19 (4), respectively, of subsection (c).

20 “(D) An analysis of gaps in lending pro-
21 grams of the Administration in serving the
22 needs of rural small business concerns.

23 “(E) Information gathered from any
24 webinars and outreach events conducted by the

1 Administration during the period covered by the
2 report.

3 “(F) A summary of activities conducted
4 under subsection (f), including—

5 “(i) the status of any memorandum of
6 understanding between the Administration
7 and the Department of Agriculture to fur-
8 ther the goals of improving service deliv-
9 ery, advice, and assistance for rural small
10 business concerns;

11 “(ii) a summary of outreach efforts
12 under subsection (f)(1);

13 “(iii) a summary of working groups
14 created under subsection (f)(2), including
15 any synergies identified in capital access
16 programs under subparagraph (A) of such
17 subsection; and

18 “(iv) efforts to coordinate outreach
19 under subsection (f)(2)(B).”.

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