

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6515

Statement of Ranking Member Nydia M. Velázquez
Committee on House Administration Full Committee Hearing:
“Committee Funding for the 118th Congress”
March 1, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle and all the members of the committee. I really appreciate the opportunity to discuss the budget submission for the Small Business Committee in the 118th Congress.

Let me echo what I have said time and again in this forum and in others: small businesses are the backbone of the American economy. That was proven during the Great Recession and again during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee on Small Business was called upon to ensure the stability of the nation’s small business community and the many jobs they support in our local communities. Our committee responded quickly to create several historic emergency programs – the largest in history – to be a lifeline for businesses of various sizes and even nonprofits. Our staff, one of the smallest in the House, worked tirelessly during and after the pandemic to do right by small employers. I am also proud to be the only committee in Congress to have held an in-person hearing at the height of the start of the pandemic. As a matter of fact, it was a Member Day hearing where 44 of our House colleagues testified in addition to the 24 Members of the Small Business Committee who shared their stories of how the pandemic and response programs impacted their districts.

Our work has continued since then to oversee each of those programs in conjunction with authorized SBA programs to protect taxpayer dollars. In the past two Congresses, we held numerous hearings with the Government Accountability Office and the SBA Office of the Inspector General, as well as the Department of Treasury and the SBA. In fact, our oversight efforts increased last Congress – primarily in an effort to work with the IG and DOJ to hold bad actors accountable for fraud in covid programs. In that vein, we enacted two bills that gave the DOJ and other investigative agencies additional time to prosecute fraud in the PPP and Covid-EIDL programs. These laws were the product of the robust bipartisan oversight conducted by our committee.

The committee not only has jurisdiction over the Small Business Administration, but we are often relied upon by our nation’s small businesses to look out for their best interests. From health care to taxes, energy to capital access, contracting to technology, agriculture to trade, these are just a few of the issues that Chairman Williams and I, along with our members, must delve into. I am committed to working with the chairman on these issues and more.

But this work does require an investment by Congress. The committee needs to be funded at such a level where it allows us to do our work with sufficient resources and without having to sacrifice our staff. Historically, this committee has been underfunded, with the effects of sequestration compounding the situation in years past. Nevertheless, the Minority continues to keep operational expenses at a minimum, all the while being understaffed. The slots are there, but the funds simply are not. I'm proud of the work we've been able to do these last few Congresses and it is even more of an achievement to have done so much with so little. We have operated efficiently and effectively but I do ask for a minimal increase to ensure we can properly oversee these programs, which will require years of work.

It goes without saying that Chairman Williams and I, along with our committee members, plan to continue working together in a bipartisan manner to fulfill our jurisdictional responsibility. We know the task at hand that you have in reviewing the numbers, but we ask that you do so with the utmost consideration. A very modest increase that the Chairman is requesting will go a long way in helping the committee hire staff, upgrade our oversight technologies, and restart our field hearings to meet our members and their constituents to truly serve their needs.

Thank you and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.