

in a bipartisan manner. I thank the chair for working with me to advance these bills to the floor.

Small Business Development Centers provide valuable resources and free counseling to entrepreneurs across this great Nation. This Congress, I have heard from several small businesses who have benefited from the SBDC's services.

In my home State of Missouri, the Missouri Small Business Development Center helped a local brewery create a business plan and apply for a 504 loan to grow their business. They also helped a veteran-owned food shipping business scale up and find new partnerships during the pandemic.

They supported countless small businesses in accessing SBA's COVID relief programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster loans. I am grateful for their wide range of services to entrepreneurs.

This important legislation will allow SBDCs to continue their important services and expand their network of small business beneficiaries through marketing.

This legislation also ensures SBDC's client information is protected and that cooperation, communication, and collaboration between SBA and SBDC networks is improved.

I thank Mr. GOLDEN for working on this legislation with the late Jim Hagedorn. As we all know, Jim was a champion for small businesses and a truly invaluable member of our Small Business Committee. He will certainly be missed. He leaves a huge hole on our side of the aisle with regard to support of small businesses, and we remember him today.

I also thank the chair for working with me in a bipartisan manner to advance this bill.

I urge my colleagues to ensure that SBDCs can continue serving our small business constituents and communities, and to support H.R. 6445, which was passed favorably out of our committee by a voice vote and passed the House in a similar form last Congress.

The Small Business Development Center network is critical in assisting our small business owners during their entrepreneurial business journey. H.R. 6445 will enhance and improve this journey and ensure the program remains strong and vibrant on behalf of America's small businesses.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6445, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

There is no question that we need to support the cornerstone of the SBA's entrepreneurial programs, the Small Business Development Centers. SBDCs are SBA's premier resource partner with centers in communities across the country. Their free or low-cost counseling and training have helped sustain small businesses and entrepreneurs throughout the pandemic.

H.R. 6445 continues the long tradition of SBDC's work to meet the ever-evolving needs of America's entrepreneurs as they emerge from the pandemic. Strengthening the SBDC network will, in turn, provide the support our small businesses need in order to thrive.

Today's bill is endorsed by America's SBDCs, an association representing the 63 SBDC networks and their nearly 1,000 centers.

I thank Mr. GOLDEN and remember the late Mr. Hagedorn for their bipartisan work on this bill.

I urge my colleagues to vote "yes," and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6445.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTERS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2022

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6441) to amend the Small Business Act to improve the women's business center program, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6441

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Women's Business Centers Improvement Act of 2022".

SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER PROGRAM.

Section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656) is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 29. WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER PROGRAM.

"(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR.—The term 'Assistant Administrator' means the Assistant Administrator of the Office of Women's Business Ownership established under subsection (k).

"(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term 'eligible entity' means—

"(A) an organization described in section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of such Code;

"(B) a State, regional, or local economic development organization, if the organization certifies that grant funds received under this section will not be commingled with other funds;

"(C) an institution of higher education (as defined in section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965), unless such institution is currently receiving a grant under section 21;

"(D) a development, credit, or finance corporation chartered by a State, if such corporation certifies that grant funds received under this section will not be commingled with other funds; or

"(E) any combination of entities listed in subparagraphs (A) through (D).

"(3) SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY WOMEN.—The term 'small

business concern owned and controlled by women' has the meaning given under section 3(n).

"(4) RESOURCE PARTNERS.—The term 'resource partners' means small business development centers, chapters of the Service Corps of Retired Executives (established under section 8(b)(1)(B)), and Veteran Business Outreach Centers (described under section 32).

"(5) WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER.—The term 'women's business center' means the location at which counseling and training on the management, operations (including manufacturing, services, and retail), access to capital, international trade, government procurement opportunities, and any other matter that is needed to start, maintain, or expand a small business concern owned and controlled by women.

"(6) WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER ASSOCIATION.—The term 'Women's Business Center Association' means a membership organization formed by women's business centers to pursue matters of common concern.

"(b) AUTHORITY.—

"(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established a Women's Business Center Program under which the Administrator may enter into a cooperative agreement with an eligible entity to provide a grant to such eligible entity to operate one or more women's business centers for the benefit of small business concerns owned and controlled by women.

"(2) USE OF FUNDS.—A women's business center established using funds made available under this section shall be designed to provide entrepreneurial counseling and training that meets the needs of the small business concerns owned and controlled by women, especially such concerns owned and controlled by women who are both socially and economically disadvantaged (as defined under section 8(a)), and shall provide—

"(A) financial assistance, including counseling and training on how to—

"(i) apply for and secure business credit and investment capital;

"(ii) prepare and present financial statements; and

"(iii) manage cash flow and other financial operations of a small business concern;

"(B) management assistance, including counseling and training on how to plan, organize, staff, direct, and control each major activity and function of a small business concern; and

"(C) marketing assistance, including counseling and training on how to—

"(i) identify and segment domestic and international market opportunities;

"(ii) prepare and execute marketing plans;

"(iii) develop pricing strategies;

"(iv) locate contract opportunities;

"(v) negotiate contracts; and

"(vi) use various public relations and advertising techniques.

"(3) TYPES OF GRANTS.—

"(A) INITIAL GRANT.—The amount of an initial grant, which shall be for a 5-year term, provided under this subsection to an eligible entity shall be not more than \$300,000 annually (as such amount is annually adjusted by the Administrator to reflect the change in inflation).

"(B) CONTINUATION GRANTS.—The Administrator may award a continuation grant, which shall be for a 5-year term, of not more than \$300,000 annually (as such amount is annually adjusted by the Administrator to reflect the change in inflation) to an eligible entity that received an initial grant under subparagraph (A). There shall be no limitation on the number of continuation grants an eligible entity may receive under this section.

"(c) APPLICATION.—

“(1) INITIAL GRANTS AND CONTINUATION GRANTS.—To receive an initial grant or continuation grant under this section, an eligible entity shall submit an application to the Administrator in such form, in such manner, and containing such information as the Administrator may require, including—

“(A) a certification that the eligible entity—

“(i) has designated an executive director or program manager, who may be compensated using grant funds awarded under this section or other sources, to manage each women's business center for which a grant under subsection (b) is sought; and

“(ii) meets accounting and reporting requirements established by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget;

“(B) information demonstrating the experience and effectiveness of the eligible entity in—

“(i) providing entrepreneurial counseling and training described under subsection (b)(2);

“(ii) providing training and services to a representative number of women who are both socially and economically disadvantaged; and

“(iii) working with resource partners, offices of the Administration, and other public and private entities engaging in entrepreneurial and small business development; and

“(C) a 5-year plan that—

“(i) includes information relating to the assistance to be provided by each women's business center in the area in which each such center is located;

“(ii) describes the ability of the eligible entity to meet the needs of the market to be served by each women's business center;

“(iii) describes the ability of the eligible entity to obtain the matching funds required under subsection (e); and

“(iv) describes the ability of the eligible entity to provide entrepreneurial counseling and training described under subsection (b)(2), including to a representative number of women who are both socially and economically disadvantaged.

“(2) RECORD RETENTION.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall maintain a copy of each application submitted under this subsection for not less than 5 years.

“(B) PAPERWORK REDUCTION.—The Administrator shall take steps to reduce, to the maximum extent practicable, the paperwork burden associated with carrying out subparagraph (A).

“(d) SELECTION OF ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—In selecting recipients of initial grants, the Administrator shall consider—

“(A) the experience of the applicant in providing entrepreneurial counseling and training;

“(B) the amount of time needed for the applicant to commence operation of a women's business center;

“(C) in consultation with a Women's Business Center Association, the capacity of the applicant to meet the accreditation standards established under subsection (k)(4) in a timely manner;

“(D) the ability of the applicant to sustain operations, including the applicant's ability to obtain matching funds under subsection (e), for a 5-year period;

“(E) the proposed location of a women's business center to be operated by the applicant and the location's proximity to Veteran Business Outreach Centers and to recipients of grants under section 8(b)(1) or 21;

“(F) the population density of the area to be served by the women's business center operated by the applicant; and

“(G) the advice and counsel of a Women's Business Center Association to determine

areas with unmet needs and the likelihood that the recipient will become accredited.

“(2) SELECTION CRITERIA.—

“(A) RULEMAKING.—The Administrator shall issue regulations to specify the criteria for review and selection of applicants under this subsection.

“(B) MODIFICATIONS PROHIBITED AFTER ANNOUNCEMENT.—With respect to a public announcement of any opportunity to be awarded a grant under this section made by the Administrator pursuant to subsection (1)(1), the Administrator may not modify regulations issued pursuant to subparagraph (A) with respect to such opportunity unless required to do so by an Act of Congress or an order of a Federal court.

“(C) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this paragraph may be construed as prohibiting the Administrator from modifying the regulations issued pursuant to subparagraph (A) (after providing an opportunity for notice and comment) as such regulations apply to an opportunity to be awarded a grant under this section that the Administrator has not yet publicly announced pursuant to subsection (1)(1).

“(e) MATCHING REQUIREMENTS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (5), upon approval of an application submitted under subsection (c), the eligible entity shall agree to obtain contributions from non-Federal sources—

“(A) in the first and second year of the term of an initial grant, if applicable, 1 non-Federal dollar for every 2 Federal dollars; and

“(B) in each subsequent year of the term of an initial grant, if applicable, or for the term of a continuation grant, 1 non-Federal dollar for each Federal dollar.

“(2) FORM OF MATCHING FUNDS.—Not more than one-half of non-Federal matching funds described under paragraph (1) may be in the form of in-kind contributions that are budget line items only, including office equipment and office space.

“(3) SOLICITATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an eligible entity may—

“(A) solicit cash and in-kind contributions from private individuals and entities to be used to operate a women's business center; and

“(B) use amounts made available by the Administrator under this section for the cost of such solicitation and management of the contributions received.

“(4) DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS.—The Administrator may disburse an amount not greater than 25 percent of the total amount of a grant awarded to an eligible entity before such eligible entity obtains the matching funds described under paragraph (1).

“(5) FAILURE TO OBTAIN MATCHING FUNDS.—If an eligible entity fails to obtain the required matching funds described under paragraph (1), the eligible entity may not be eligible to receive advance disbursements pursuant to paragraph (4) during the remainder of the term, if applicable, of an initial grant awarded under this section. Before approving such eligible entity for a continuation grant under this section, the Administrator shall make a written determination, including the reasons for such determination, of whether the Administrator believes that the eligible entity will be able to obtain the requisite matching funding under paragraph (1) for such continuation grant.

“(6) WAIVER OF NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Upon request by an eligible entity and in accordance with this paragraph, the Administrator may waive, in whole or in part, the requirement to obtain matching funds under paragraph (1) for a grant awarded under this section for the eligible entity for a 1-year term of the grant.

“(B) CONSIDERATIONS.—In determining whether to issue a waiver under this paragraph, the Administrator shall consider—

“(i) the economic conditions affecting the eligible entity;

“(ii) the demonstrated ability of the eligible entity to raise non-Federal funds; and

“(iii) the performance of the eligible entity under the initial grant.

“(C) LIMITATION.—The Administrator may not issue a waiver under this paragraph if the Administrator determines that granting the waiver would undermine the credibility of the Women's Business Center Program.

“(7) EXCESS NON-FEDERAL DOLLARS.—The amount of non-Federal dollars obtained by an eligible entity that is greater than the amount that is required to be obtained by the eligible entity under this subsection shall not be subject to the requirements of part 200 of title 2, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor thereto, if such amount of non-Federal dollars—

“(A) is not used as matching funds for purposes of implementing the Women's Business Center Program; and

“(B) was not obtained by using funds granted under the Women's Business Center Program.

“(8) CARRYOVER.—An eligible entity may use excess non-Federal dollars described in paragraph (7) to satisfy the matching funds requirement under paragraph (1) for the subsequent 1-year grant term, if applicable, except that such amounts shall be subject to the requirements of part 200 of title 2, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor thereto.

“(f) OTHER REQUIREMENTS.—

“(1) SEPARATION OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity shall—

“(A) operate a women's business center under this section separately from other projects, if any, of the eligible entity; and

“(B) separately maintain and account for any grant funds received under this section.

“(2) EXAMINATION OF ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—

“(A) REQUIRED SITE VISIT.—Before receiving an initial grant under this section, each applicant shall have a site visit by an employee of the Administration, in order to ensure that the applicant has sufficient resources to provide the services for which the grant is being provided.

“(B) ANNUAL REVIEW.—An employee of the Administration shall—

“(i) conduct an annual programmatic and financial examination of each eligible entity, as described in subsection (g); and

“(ii) provide the results of such examination to the eligible entity.

“(3) REMEDIATION OF PROBLEMS.—

“(A) PLAN OF ACTION.—If an examination of an eligible entity conducted under paragraph (2)(B) identifies any problems, the eligible entity shall, within 45 calendar days of receiving a copy of the results of such examination, provide the Assistant Administrator with a plan of action, including specific milestones, for correcting such problems.

“(B) PLAN OF ACTION REVIEW BY THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR.—The Assistant Administrator shall review each plan of action submitted under subparagraph (A) within 30 calendar days of receiving such plan. If the Assistant Administrator determines that such plan—

“(i) will bring the eligible entity into compliance with all the terms of a cooperative agreement described in subsection (b), the Assistant Administrator shall approve such plan; or

“(ii) is inadequate to remedy the problems identified in the annual examination to

which the plan of action relates, the Assistant Administrator shall set forth such reasons in writing and provide such determination to the eligible entity within 15 calendar days of such determination.

“(C) AMENDMENT TO PLAN OF ACTION.—An eligible entity receiving a determination under subparagraph (B)(ii) shall have 30 calendar days from the receipt of the determination to amend the plan of action to satisfy the problems identified by the Assistant Administrator and resubmit such plan to the Assistant Administrator.

“(D) AMENDED PLAN REVIEW BY THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR.—Within 15 calendar days of the receipt of an amended plan of action under subparagraph (C), the Assistant Administrator shall either approve or reject such plan and provide such approval or rejection in writing to the eligible entity.

“(E) APPEAL OF ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR DETERMINATION.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—If the Assistant Administrator rejects an amended plan under subparagraph (D), the eligible entity shall have the opportunity to appeal such decision to the Administrator, who may delegate such appeal to an appropriate officer of the Administration.

“(ii) OPPORTUNITY FOR EXPLANATION.—Any appeal described under clause (i) shall provide an opportunity for the eligible entity to provide, in writing, an explanation of why the eligible entity's amended plan remedies the problems identified in the annual examination conducted under paragraph (2)(B).

“(iii) NOTICE OF DETERMINATION.—The Administrator shall provide to the eligible entity a determination of the appeal, in writing, not later than 15 calendar days after the eligible entity files an appeal under this subparagraph.

“(iv) EFFECT OF FAILURE TO ACT.—If the Administrator fails to act on an appeal made under this subparagraph within the 15-day period specified under clause (iii), the eligible entity's amended plan of action submitted under subparagraph (C) shall be deemed to be approved.

“(4) TERMINATION OF GRANT.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall terminate a grant to an eligible entity under this section if the eligible entity fails to comply with—

“(i) a plan of action approved by the Assistant Administrator under paragraph (3)(B)(i); or

“(ii) an amended plan of action approved by the Assistant Administrator under paragraph (3)(D) or approved on appeal under paragraph (3)(E).

“(B) APPEAL OF TERMINATION.—An eligible entity shall have the opportunity to challenge the termination of a grant under subparagraph (A) on the record and after an opportunity for a hearing.

“(C) FINAL AGENCY ACTION.—A determination made pursuant to subparagraph (B) shall be considered final agency action for the purposes of chapter 7 of title 5, United States Code.

“(5) CONSULTATION WITH MAJORITY WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER ASSOCIATION.—If on the date of the enactment of this subsection, a majority of women's business centers that are operating pursuant to agreements with the Administration are members of an individual Women's Business Center Association, the Administrator shall—

“(A) recognize the existence and activities of such Association; and

“(B) consult with the Association on, and negotiate with the Association in the development of documents with respect to—

“(i) announcing the annual scope of activities pursuant to this section;

“(ii) requesting proposals to deliver assistance as provided in this section; and

“(iii) governing the general operations and administration of women's business centers, specifically including the development of regulations and a uniform negotiated cooperative agreement for use on an annual basis when entering into individual cooperative agreements with women's business centers.

“(6) ENFORCEMENT.—

“(A) GRANTS.—The Assistant Administrator shall develop policies and procedures to minimize the possibility of awarding a grant to an eligible entity that will operate a women's business center that likely will not remain in compliance with program and financial requirements.

“(B) INDIVIDUAL COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—The Assistant Administrator shall enforce the terms of any individual cooperative agreement described in paragraph (5)(B)(iii).

“(g) PROGRAM EXAMINATION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administration shall—

“(A) develop and implement an annual programmatic and financial examination of each eligible entity receiving a grant under this section, under which each such eligible entity shall provide to the Administration—

“(i) an itemized cost breakdown of actual expenditures for costs incurred during the preceding year; and

“(ii) documentation regarding the amount of matching assistance from non-Federal sources obtained and expended by the eligible entity during the preceding year in order to meet the requirements of subsection (e) and, with respect to any in-kind contributions described in subsection (e)(2) that were used to satisfy the requirements of subsection (e), verification of the existence and valuation of those contributions; and

“(B) analyze the results of each such examination and, based on that analysis, make a determination regarding the programmatic and financial viability of each women's business center operated by the eligible entity.

“(2) CONDITIONS FOR CONTINUED FUNDING.—In determining whether to award a continuation grant to an eligible entity, the Administrator—

“(A) shall consider the results of the most recent examination of the eligible entity under paragraph (1);

“(B) shall determine if—

“(i) the eligible entity has failed to provide, or provided inadequate, information under paragraph (1)(A); or

“(ii) the eligible entity has failed to provide any information required to be provided by a women's business center for purposes of the management report under subsection (m)(1), or the information provided by the center is inadequate; and

“(C) shall consider the accreditation status as described in subsection (k)(4).

“(3) ADDITIONAL OVERSIGHT.—The Assistant Administrator shall work with the Women's Business Center Association recognized under subsection (f)(5) (as applicable) to develop, implement, and maintain policies and procedures for conducting financial examinations under this subsection and to maintain internal controls that ensure that such financial examinations are conducted properly.

“(h) NOTICE AND COMMENT REQUIRED.—The Administrator may only make a change to the standards by which an eligible entity obtains or maintains grants under this section, the standards for accreditation, or any other requirement for the operation of a women's business center if the Administrator first provides notice and the opportunity for public comment, as set forth in section 553(b) of title 5, United States Code, without regard to any exceptions provided for under such section.

“(i) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—

“(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—An eligible entity that receives a grant under this section may enter into a contract with a Federal department or agency to provide specific assistance to small business concerns owned and controlled by women and other underserved small business concerns, if performance of such a contract does not hinder the ability of the eligible entity to carry out the terms of a grant received under this section.

“(2) ADMINISTRATOR.—The authority of the Administrator to enter into contracts shall be in effect for each fiscal year only to the extent and in the amounts as are provided in advance in appropriations Acts. After the Administrator has entered into a contract, either as a grant or a cooperative agreement, with any applicant under this section, the Administrator shall not suspend, terminate, or fail to renew or extend any such contract unless the Administrator provides the applicant with written notification setting forth the reasons therefore and affords the applicant an opportunity for a hearing, appeal, or other administrative proceeding under chapter 5 of title 5, United States Code.

“(j) PRIVACY REQUIREMENTS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A women's business center may not disclose the name, address, or telephone number of any individual or small business concern receiving assistance under this section without the consent of such individual or small business concern, unless—

“(A) the Administrator orders such disclosure after the Administrator is ordered to make such a disclosure by a court in any civil or criminal enforcement action initiated by a Federal or State agency; or

“(B) the Administrator considers such a disclosure to be necessary for the purpose of conducting a financial audit of a women's business center, except that such a disclosure shall be limited to the information necessary for such audit.

“(2) ADMINISTRATION USE OF INFORMATION.—This subsection shall not—

“(A) restrict Administration access to women's business center data; or

“(B) prevent the Administration from using information about individuals who use women's business centers to conduct surveys of such individuals.

“(3) REGULATIONS.—The Administrator shall issue regulations to establish standards for disclosures for purposes of a financial audit described under paragraph (1)(B).

“(k) OFFICE OF WOMEN'S BUSINESS OWNERSHIP.—

“(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within the Administration an Office of Women's Business Ownership, which shall be responsible for the administration of the Administration's programs for the development of women's business enterprises (as defined in section 408 of the Women's Business Ownership Act of 1988). The Office of Women's Business Ownership shall be administered by an Assistant Administrator, who shall be appointed by the Administrator.

“(2) ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE OFFICE OF WOMEN'S BUSINESS OWNERSHIP.—

“(A) QUALIFICATION.—The position of Assistant Administrator shall be a Senior Executive Service position under section 3132(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code. The Assistant Administrator shall serve as a noncareer appointee (as defined in section 3132(a)(7) of that title).

“(B) DUTIES.—The Assistant Administrator shall administer the programs and services of the Office of Women's Business Ownership and perform the following functions:

“(i) Recommend the annual administrative and program budgets of the Office and eligible entities receiving a grant under the Women's Business Center Program.

“(ii) Review the annual budgets submitted by each eligible entity receiving a grant

under the Women's Business Center Program.

“(iii) Collaborate with other Federal departments and agencies, State and local governments, not-for-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations to maximize utilization of taxpayer dollars and reduce (or eliminate) any duplication among the programs overseen by the Office of Women's Business Ownership and those of other entities that provide similar services to women entrepreneurs.

“(iv) Maintain a clearinghouse to provide for the dissemination and exchange of information between women's business centers.

“(v) Serve as the vice chairperson of the Interagency Committee on Women's Business Enterprise and as the liaison for the National Women's Business Council.

“(3) MISSION.—The mission of the Office of Women's Business Ownership shall be to assist women entrepreneurs to start, grow, and compete in global markets by providing quality support with access to capital, access to markets, job creation, growth, and counseling by—

“(A) fostering participation of women entrepreneurs in the economy by overseeing a network of women's business centers throughout States and territories;

“(B) creating public-private partnerships to support women entrepreneurs and conduct outreach and education to small business concerns owned and controlled by women; and

“(C) working with other programs of the Administrator to—

“(i) ensure women are well-represented in those programs and being served by those programs; and

“(ii) identify gaps where participation by women in those programs could be increased.

“(4) ACCREDITATION PROGRAM.—

“(A) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 270 days after the date of enactment of this paragraph, the Administrator shall publish standards for a program to accredit eligible entities that receive a grant under this section.

“(B) PUBLIC COMMENT; TRANSITION.—Before publishing the standards under subparagraph (A), the Administrator—

“(i) shall provide a period of not less than 60 days for public comment on such standards; and

“(ii) may not terminate a grant under this section absent evidence of fraud or other criminal misconduct by the recipient.

“(C) CONTRACTING AUTHORITY.—The Administrator may provide financial support, by contract or otherwise, to a Women's Business Center Association to provide assistance in establishing the standards required under subparagraph (A) or for carrying out an accreditation program pursuant to such standards.

“(5) CONTINUATION GRANT CONSIDERATIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—In determining whether to award a continuation grant under this section, the Administrator shall consider the results of the annual programmatic and financial examination conducted under subsection (g) and the accreditation program.

“(B) ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENT.—After the end of the 2-year period beginning on the date of enactment of this subsection, the Administration may not award a continuation grant under this section unless the applicable eligible entity has been approved under the accreditation program conducted pursuant to this subsection, except that the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Women's Business Ownership may waive such accreditation requirement, in the discretion of the Assistant Administrator, upon a showing that the eligible entity is making a good faith effort to obtain accreditation.

“(6) ANNUAL CONFERENCE.—Each women's business center shall participate in annual professional development at an annual conference facilitated by a Women's Business Center Association.

“(1) NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER PROGRAM.—The Administrator shall provide the following:

“(1) A public announcement of any opportunity to be awarded grants under this section, to include the selection criteria under subsection (d) and any applicable regulations.

“(2) To any applicant for a grant under this section that failed to obtain such a grant, an opportunity to debrief with the Administrator to review the reasons for the applicant's failure.

“(3) To an eligible entity that receives an initial grant under this section, if a site visit or review of the eligible entity is carried out by an officer or employee of the Administration (other than the Inspector General), a copy of the site visit report or evaluation, as applicable, within 30 calendar days of the completion of such visit or evaluation.

“(m) ANNUAL MANAGEMENT REPORT.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall prepare and submit to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate an annual report on the effectiveness of women's business centers operated through a grant awarded under this section.

“(2) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include—

“(A) information concerning, with respect to each women's business center established pursuant to a grant awarded under this section, the most recent analysis of the annual programmatic and financial examination of the applicable eligible entity, as required under subsection (g)(1)(B), and the subsequent determination made by the Administration under that subsection;

“(B) the number of persons counseled and trained through the Women's Business Center Program;

“(C) the total number of hours of counseling and training through the Program;

“(D) the demographics of Program participants to include gender, race, and age of each such participant;

“(E) the number of Program participants who are veterans;

“(F) the number of new businesses started by participants in the Program;

“(G) to the extent practicable, the number of jobs supported, created or retained with assistance from women's business centers;

“(H) the amount of capital secured by participants in the Program, including through loans and equity investment;

“(I) the number of participants in the Program receiving financial assistance, including the type and dollar amount, under the loan programs of the Administration;

“(J) an estimate of gross receipts, including to the extent practicable a description of any change in revenue of small business concerns assisted through the Program;

“(K) to the maximum extent practicable, increases or decreases in revenues for the assisted small business concerns;

“(L) the number of referrals made to other resources and programs of the Administration;

“(M) the results of satisfaction surveys of participants, including a summary of any comments received from such participants; and

“(N) any recommendations by the Administrator to improve the delivery of services by women's business centers.

“(n) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Administration to carry out this section, to remain available until expended, \$31,500,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2025.

“(2) USE OF AMOUNTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), amounts made available under this subsection for fiscal year 2022, and each fiscal year thereafter, may only be used for grant awards and may not be used for costs incurred by the Administration in connection with the management and administration of the program under this section.

“(B) EXCEPTIONS.—Of the amount made available under this subsection for a fiscal year, the following amounts shall be available for costs incurred by the Administration in connection with the management and administration of the program under this section:

“(i) For the first fiscal year beginning after the date of the enactment of this subparagraph, 2.65 percent.

“(ii) For the second fiscal year beginning after the date of the enactment of this subparagraph and each fiscal year thereafter through fiscal year 2025, 2.5 percent.

“(3) EXPEDITED ACQUISITION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Administrator may use such expedited acquisition methods as the Administrator determines to be appropriate to carry out this section, except that the Administrator shall ensure that all small business sources are provided a reasonable opportunity to submit proposals.

“(4) ACCREDITATION AND ANNUAL CONFERENCE.—Not less than \$500,000 of the amounts appropriated pursuant to paragraph (1) for a fiscal year shall be available for purposes of carrying out subsection (k), of which no less than \$50,000 shall be available to support an annual conference described under subsection (k)(6).”

SEC. 3. EFFECT ON EXISTING GRANTS.

(a) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—A nonprofit organization receiving a grant under section 29(m) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656(m)), as in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act, shall continue to receive the grant under the terms and conditions in effect for the grant on the day before the date of enactment of this Act, except that the nonprofit organization may not apply for a continuation of the grant under section 29(m)(5) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656(m)(5)), as in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act.

(b) LENGTH OF CONTINUATION GRANT.—The Administrator of the Small Business Administration may award a grant under section 29 of the Small Business Act, as amended by this Act, to a nonprofit organization receiving a grant under section 29(m) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656(m)), as in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act, for the period—

(1) beginning on the day after the last day of the grant agreement under such section 29(m); and

(2) ending at the end of the third fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 4. REGULATIONS.

Not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of Small Business Administration shall issue such rules as are necessary to carry out section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656), as amended by this Act, and ensure that a period of public comment for such rules is not less than 60 days.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr.

LUETKEMEYER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the measure under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6441, the Women's Business Center Improvement Act of 2022. This bill will modernize and strengthen the Small Business Administration's Women's Business Center program to better serve America's women entrepreneurs and women-owned small businesses.

I thank Ms. DAVIDS and Ms. TENNEY for their meaningful work to ensure women entrepreneurs across the country have continued access to vital counseling and training.

WBCs are a critical component of SBA's Resource Partner ecosystem, assisting women in communities across the country, particularly those that are socially and economically disadvantaged.

The WBC program forms more than 130 centers nationwide and offers a full range of counseling and training services for all stages of business development. Many of the WBCs provide multilingual services, maintain evening and weekend hours to accommodate clients who work full time, and provide childcare.

In fiscal year 2020, with the additional funding provided by the CARES Act, the WBC program increased their reach by 22 percent and trained and advised more than 82,000 clients, helping them create nearly 30,000 small businesses.

As we all know, women were particularly hard-hit by the pandemic. Women-owned businesses closed at higher rates than their male counterparts as women disproportionately left the workforce to be the primary caregivers for their families.

That is why I am pleased to support the Women's Business Centers Improvement Act of 2022, which increases the program's annual authorization level and increases the cap on individual center grants. By doing so, more established centers can expand their reach to greater numbers of women.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to support this bipartisan bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in support of H.R. 6441, the Women's Business Centers Improvement Act of 2022.

Women's Business Centers, WBCs, support over 150,000 women entre-

preneurs each year through training, mentoring, business development, and financing opportunities. This legislation, H.R. 6441, will bring increased oversight to the WBC program and long overdue modernizations.

This legislation improves collaboration with the SBA's Office of Women's Business Ownership and requires the SBA to provide an annual report to Congress to measure the effectiveness of the WBC program.

We have found that we have got some problems with some of the WBC offices, and this legislation will help weed out the bad actors by requiring SBA to develop policies and procedures to reduce the possibility of awarding grants to a WBC that will likely not remain in compliance with the program.

This important legislation will not only ensure the integrity of the WBC program, but also support female entrepreneurs in their business ventures.

□ 1430

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ms. DAVIDS and Ms. TENNEY for working in a bipartisan manner to ensure this bill reached the House floor. I thank the chair for advancing this bill.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support H.R. 6441, which was unanimously reported out of our committee and has previously passed the House floor in a similar form.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Kansas (Ms. DAVIDS), the chair of the Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Tax, and Capital Access.

Ms. DAVIDS of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairwoman VELÁZQUEZ and our ranking member for all the work they are doing on the House Committee on Small Business.

I rise today to urge my colleagues to stand up for the small business owners in their community and vote for my bill to support the Women's Business Centers.

Women are the engine of our economy. Women-owned businesses employ 9.4 million people nationwide, contributing \$1.2 trillion to our economy each year. When we invest in the success of women, we are giving our entire economy a boost.

Women's Business Centers are an effective resource that reach more than 88,000 entrepreneurs each year through training, mentorship, and counseling. In 2020 alone, the WBC program increased its outreach by 22 percent and helped start and sustain more than 30,000 small businesses.

To put it clearly, during the pandemic, they increased their outreach. That is a solid record of success made even more impressive by the commitment to stepping up when they were needed the most.

I have visited with the local Kansas City Women's Business Center in Overland Park. They serve the Kansas City metro area and the entire State of

Kansas. I have also spoken with women who have used their services, folks like Lenora, who started Technology Group Solutions 15 years ago with the help of the Kansas City Women's Business Center. She now oversees more than 80 employees in three States.

She told me that she hears from women who don't have the network or access to capital that they need to get their businesses off the ground. She sends them to the WBC because when Lenora first started her business, the center helped fill those gaps, paving the way for her to grow what is now a multimillion-dollar company.

Other women I have spoken with specifically cite the WBC's evening and weekend hours and that they offer childcare during training sessions. It is those tailored services that have made these centers such a crucial contributor to the success of so many businessowners.

My bill, which we are voting on today, will enhance the WBC program to ensure that women entrepreneurs all across the country have access to counseling and training services. I have seen it in action, and it is why I introduced and strongly support this bipartisan piece of legislation.

It would raise the cap on grants for the first time since the program began and create an accreditation system to help establish standards of excellence, ensuring that our funds are being spent wisely to help growing entrepreneurs.

The Kansas City Women's Business Center served more than 800 clients last year. How many more businesses could they grow? How many more aspiring entrepreneurs could they reach with more resources?

I am proud to have introduced this important piece of legislation alongside Congresswoman TENNEY, and I urge a "yes" vote.

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY), a strong advocate for small businesses and the ranking member of the Small Business Subcommittee for Underserved, Agricultural, and Rural Business Development.

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 6441, the Women's Business Centers Improvement Act, legislation that I am honored to lead with my colleague, Representative SHARICE DAVIDS.

Female entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses play a critical role in our Nation's economy. As a longtime small business owner myself, and the owner of a woman-owned business, I understand the challenges women-owned small businesses face, especially in rural communities.

The Women's Business Center program at the Small Business Administration has been helping women overcome obstacles and build thriving businesses for over 30 years. With more than 150 locations across the Nation, the Women's Business Center program provides over 150,000 female small business owners annually with resources

and guidance, helping them to identify opportunities for growth.

The bipartisan Women's Business Centers Improvement Act will strengthen the Women's Business Center program, increase authorized funding, and enact commonsense taxpayer protections and oversight provisions to safeguard public dollars and ensure that the program efficiently serves the American people.

Additionally, the bill will expand the cap on grants made available under this program, which will better support our women entrepreneurs. These improvements will help the Women's Business Centers program run efficiently and expand into more communities, like those underserved communities particularly in my district and Ms. DAVIDS' district and all across New York and our Nation.

I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan women-owned small businesses bill and vote "yes" on H.R. 6441.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN).

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Women's Business Centers Improvement Act, and I thank Representatives DAVIDS and TENNEY for their work on this very important and bipartisan piece of legislation.

As our small business owners continue to recover from the pandemic, Congress must do everything it can to ensure access to quality entrepreneurial development resources.

Underscoring the need for this bill, a recent study in partnership with the Association of Women's Business Centers found that profits for female business owners dropped by 26 percent from 2020 to 2021, with average profits of about \$47,000 less than male-owned firms.

The economic pressures of the pandemic have hit women-owned businesses particularly hard, including increasing operating expenses due to supply chain disruptions and rising costs.

As an entrepreneur myself, I recognize the challenges women business leaders face every day and especially in this moment. It is why I stand before you to talk about the importance of passing the Women's Business Centers Improvement Act.

This legislation will make needed improvements to the Small Business Administration's successful Women's Business Center program. The bill will also strengthen the Office of Women's Business Ownership and will improve coordination between the Association of Women's Business Centers and the SBA.

Furthermore, this legislation allows Congress to increase funding for Women's Business Center programs, which I have been proud to advocate for with my colleague, Representative MARIE NEWMAN.

With these additional resources, the SBA will be able to advise and train more women entrepreneurs. I have seen

the demand for such programs right in my community of Chester and Berks Counties.

In fact, this bipartisan effort is especially impactful for our Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which has one of the highest numbers of women-owned businesses in the Nation. The time is now to build on that success.

I thank Small Business Committee Chair VELÁZQUEZ and Ranking Member LUETKEMEYER again for helping to bring this important bill to a vote before the House today. I urge my colleagues to join me and vote "yes" today on this bipartisan bill to support our small business owners.

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, the WBC program has delivered for women-owned small businesses for many years. This legislation reauthorizes the program, increases accountability and oversight, and ensures the program continues to serve our entrepreneurs in the future.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6441, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Women are vital members of the Nation's critical small business community and the American economy. H.R. 6441 will modernize and strengthen SBA's WBC program so it can meet the moment and provide the necessary resources to women, particularly the ones driven out of the workforce during the pandemic.

Not only have Ms. DAVIDS and Ms. TENNEY continued to work to improve the WBC program, but they have expanded upon our efforts last Congress by addressing the challenges highlighted during the public health emergency. I thank them for this effort.

I urge my colleagues to vote "yes," and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6441.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SCORE FOR SMALL BUSINESS ACT OF 2022

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6450) to amend the Small Business Act to reauthorize the SCORE program, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6450

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "SCORE for Small Business Act of 2022".

SEC. 2. SCORE PROGRAM PROVISIONS AND REQUIREMENTS.

Section 8 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)(1)(B)—

(A) by striking "a Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)" and inserting "the SCORE program described in subsection (c)"; and

(B) by striking "SCORE may" and inserting "the SCORE Association (as defined in subsection (c)) may"; and

(2) by striking subsection (c) and inserting the following:

"(c) SCORE PROGRAM.—

"(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

"(A) SCORE ASSOCIATION.—The term 'SCORE Association' means the Service Corps of Retired Executives Association or any successor or other organization that enters into a cooperative agreement (as described under paragraph (2)) with the Administrator to operate the SCORE program.

"(B) SCORE FOUNDATION.—The term 'SCORE Foundation' means an organization with a mission to support the SCORE Association and volunteers of the SCORE program.

"(C) SCORE PROGRAM.—The term 'SCORE program' means the SCORE program authorized by subsection (b)(1)(B).

"(2) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT.—The Administrator shall enter into a cooperative agreement with the SCORE Association to carry out the SCORE program, which shall include the following requirements:

"(A) ADMINISTRATOR DUTIES.—The Administrator shall—

"(i) every 2 years, conduct a financial examination of the SCORE Association to ensure that any costs paid for with Federal funds are allowable, allocable, and reasonable;

"(ii) review and approve contracts entered into by the SCORE Association to provide goods or services for the SCORE program of a value greater than an amount determined by the Administrator;

"(iii) maintain a system through which the SCORE Association provides documentation relating to such contracts; and

"(iv) within 30 days of the receipt of a quarterly report on the achievements of the SCORE program submitted by the SCORE Association, reconcile differences between such report and the performance results of the SCORE program reported in a management information system of the Office of Entrepreneurial Development.

"(B) SCORE ASSOCIATION DUTIES.—The SCORE Association shall—

"(i) manage nationwide chapters of the SCORE program;

"(ii) provide annual training to employees of the SCORE Association on generating and using program income from the SCORE program;

"(iii) submit documentation to the Administrator verifying such annual training is completed;

"(iv) separate funds donated to the SCORE Association from program income and funds received pursuant to a cooperative agreement; and

"(v) maintain and enforce requirements for volunteers participating in the SCORE program, including requirements that each such volunteer shall—

"(I) based on the business experience and knowledge of the volunteer—

"(aa) provide personal counseling, mentoring, and coaching on the process of starting, expanding, managing, buying, and selling a business at no cost to individuals who own, or aspire to own, small business concerns; and