[STORE LOGO/ADDRESS]

[DATE]

Dear Sen. [LAST NAME]:

As an independent bookstore in [TOWN/STATE], the financial plight of small businesses should be your first priority. Small businesses are the drivers of the economy, and if we close down due to government inaction, it will send a ripple effect through the economy that could last for years. We cannot wait weeks for a solution; we need action today.

We urge congress immediately to put aside partisan differences for the greater good and pass a bill *today* that will ensure there are small businesses *tomorrow*.

The financial reality of a store such as mine, where even a successful store might only generate a 2 percent net profit, means that the impact of a pandemic such as COVID-19 can have a catastrophic economic impact. Demanding that my business shut its doors “temporarily” could easily lead to my business shutting down permanently if the government does not provide us a fiscal grant to weather this storm.

This doesn’t just impact me and my staff -- when small businesses shut down, it impacts the overall economy as well.

Small businesses like mine are the engines of our economy. Bricks-and-mortar retailers employ 47 people for every $10 million in sales, according to an analysis by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance of U.S. Census data. (If chain retailers are removed from the data, leaving only independent retailers, the figure is even higher -- 57 jobs.) If COVID-19 forces the closure of countless retailers, the ripple effect it would have on the overall economy could be devastating and long-lasting.

With that in mind, I am asking that you:

* **Provide small businesses with grants NOT loans.** I urge you to provide financial grants for small businesses that must temporarily close due to social distancing measures and limitations on crowd capacity for recreational and social gatherings. And to ensure that small businesses receive their grants quickly, I ask that these grants be administered by local lenders, in whatever way this is possible. These grants or forgivable loans should cover all staff, including those who were laid off or furloughed anytime after February 29.

A small business should be able to use these grants, or forgivable loans, on overhead, such as payroll, occupancy, and frankly, whatever ensures the business weathers this unprecedented crisis.

Importantly, booksellers that are forced to take out an SBA loan in the interim as they wait for congress to act should be allowed to transition any such loan into a grant or unforgivable loan.
* **Allow bookstores to supply their local community in a safe manner that does not threaten the spread of the COVID-19 virus.** It is important to understand the role booksellers play in supplying educators at both the K-12 and university level, as well as providing materials to quarantined people who do not have internet access, whether because of income or other reasons. Toward that end, bookstore owners should be allowed to stay open in some skeletal capacity (e.g., curbside pickup) that does not threaten public health, or the health of staff, to ensure the community has access to important materials.
* **Issue rebate checks sooner** **rather than later**. Because of state and federal directives ordering businesses to shut down, people are hurting today. Few workers can wait until July or August to receive rebate checks. I am asking that the federal government begin issuing checks to citizens immediately upon passage of any law that authorizes rebates.
* **Please urge our state’s governor to enact sales tax relief measures immediately for small businesses**. California and Maryland have already enacted these with executive orders.
* **Guarantee everyone (including the uninsured) have access to COVID-19 diagnostic testing** **and treatment** at no cost to the consumer.

Senator [LAST NAME], It is crucial that you protect Main Street during this time of crisis. The Great Recession of 2008 provided us with a lesson as to the kind of ripple effect the closing of one business can have on the local economy.

As [*Time*](http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0%2C8599%2C1921445%2C00.html) reported in 2009, “a single lost job becomes infectious, combining with others and spreading through family, neighborhood and community. Widespread cutbacks in spending by families mean lower demand for businesses and lower tax revenues for the government. This belt-tightening means fewer car sales and thus fewer jobs for car-part makers. It means less government spending on infrastructure and other public services, including economic development.... it can mean a permanent drop in earning power and standard of living — a reversal of the American Dream.” This is no less true today, and what happened during the Great Recession should be our cautionary tale.

It is of the utmost importance that financial relief includes support for Main Street retailers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,