



The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

March 23, 2020

Speaker Pelosi & Majority Leader McConnell:

My name is Bryan Soukup, and I represent the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and our nearly 25,000 members, firms, and member companies. As the American people weather this global pandemic, I write to you to encourage greater economic relief for our nation's design and construction industry and, specifically, the thousands of small and sole practitioner interior design businesses across our country.

The American Society of Interior Designers traces its roots back more than 80 years and serves the full range of the interior design profession and practice through the Society's programs, networks, and advocacy. Our members cover all specialties, including workplace, healthcare, retail and hospitality, education, institutional, and residential practice, students, and corporate industry partners. We spend approximately 90% of our lives in interior environments, so our members use evidence-based and human-centric design to affect comfort, accessibility, safety, wellness, and sustainability.

The interior design industry is an economic force within the United States and globally. The industry demonstrated strong, continuous growth in economic contribution, the number of jobs, and the number of firms since 2012. The industry reported a 12.6 billion dollar value of sales in 2017 (2.8% increase from 2016). The U.S. Census reported 74,117 jobs in 2018 (22% increase since 2014) and the existence 14,061 firms nationwide. Total sales revenue for the interior design sector was an estimated 13.5 billion dollar value for 2018 and 14.7 billion dollar value estimated for 2019. The interior design industry is an important part of the engine that keeps the American economy moving and we will be there when this crisis has concluded.

The core of this industry is small business. 83% of interior design firms are small businesses of four or fewer employees and 80% of firms are women and/or minority-owned. Small businesses and their employees are the foundation of this nation's economy. The Congress and the states have an obligation to do everything they can to keep them afloat during this extraordinary crisis.



For our small business firms, we encourage the Congress to:

- Enact legislation expanding and streamlining loan programs for small businesses with fewer than 500 employees experiencing revenue loss as a result of the Coronavirus.
- Increase the maximum loan size for all SBA 7(a) loans and increase the maximum loan size for Express loans.
- Ease and expedite the process for businesses to apply for Economic Injury Disaster Loans through the Small Business Administration.
- Defer all monthly payments on federal student loans for all design professionals, including interior designers, without penalty.
- Provide additional tax cuts for small businesses.
- Waive an Employer's Annual Federal Unemployment Tax for 2020 for small business employers with under 50 employees or freeze the current rate.
- Require all business Interruption Insurance policies to cover national emergencies including those related to diseases such as COVID-19.
- Enact legislation cancelling the payment of all payroll taxes typically paid by employers for the months of March, April, May, and, perhaps, beyond.

For our many self-employed sole practitioners, we also encourage the Congress to:

- Establish an unemployment protection fund for the self-employed so they can receive benefits when their income declines due to the reduced demand for goods or services.
- Grant additional direct assistance to the self-employed to cover the cost of lost business, paid sick leave, health care costs and fixed expenses.
- Defer taxes and debt, mortgage and credit card payments for the self-employed.
- Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit.

As United States Senator Cory Booker stated on the Senate floor on March 20, 2020, "the mom and pop pizza joint to small interior design shops to barber shops, are all trying to determine how they can keep themselves afloat when their doors are closed, how they can deal with their fixed costs." Interior design firms are hurting and we ask you, as our elected leaders, to remember these small businesses and their owners as you navigate the process to provide much needed economic relief to an ailing nation.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bryan J. Soukup'.

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