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Small Business Administration Delivers Support to Rural America

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The devastating impact of COVID-19 has tested the will of millions of agricultural businesses and farms throughout rural communities all over our nation, but help is on the way. Congress just passed an extension of the Paycheck Protection Program which includes over \$310 billion in new funding to help small businesses and agricultural related industries support their payroll costs.

This program is one of the largest economic recovery efforts in our nation's history and was built in just seven short days, a true testament to the American spirit and demonstration of what is possible when we come together to serve a higher cause. By leveraging the power of private lenders, the Paycheck Protection Program provides businesses with the capital and certainty they need to retain their employees and continue serving our communities.

Of note to rural America, agricultural related industries such as production of food and fiber, ranching and raising of livestock, aquaculture, and all other independently owned farming and agriculture-related entities are eligible to participate in the program as long as they have 500 or fewer employees whose principal place of residence is the United States.

In addition to program efforts, the SBA has over 690 men and women who work in 68 field offices all across the nation serving as the agency's "boots on the ground" and the primary contact for delivering SBA's programs directly to rural communities, businesses, and stakeholders. SBA staff also work hand in hand with our resource partners at the local level, including Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), SCORE counselors, Women's Business Centers, and Veterans Business Outreach Centers to serve the needs of rural small businesses.

In response to the impact that coronavirus COVID-19 has had on our country's rural communities, and at the request of President Trump and his Administration, SBA's District Offices have been working tirelessly to serve rural small businesses and agricultural industries. District staff are collaborating closely with rural Chambers of Commerce, local governments, and elected officials to provide information on SBA programs via virtual

townhalls, webinars, and Facebook chats. The SBA has also worked to bring in additional lenders to provide Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans including credit unions, farm credit lenders, USDA Lenders, community banks, and others that serve rural businesses.

The Paycheck Protection Program is assisting rural businesses, farmers, ranchers, ag co-ops, nonprofits and the faith-based groups that serve those areas. While there's certainly more work to be done, the SBA will continue to fight for America's rural communities until this battle is won. For additional resources on the programs mentioned, and to find an SBA district office near you, please visit www.sba.gov.