

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

December 12, 2023

The Honorable Isabella Casillas Guzman
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
409 3rd St, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20416

Dear Administrator Guzman:

We write to request you promptly review any request from the State of Rhode Island for disaster assistance related to the closure of the Washington Bridge in the cities of Providence and East Providence.

Yesterday, the westbound span of the Washington Bridge, which carries Interstate 195 (I-195) over the Seekonk River between Providence and East Providence, was closed after the discovery of a critical failure of key bridge components. I-195 is the main thoroughfare connecting Providence and the eastern part of Rhode Island, and the Washington Bridge carries nearly 100,000 vehicles crossing southeastern New England each day.

The bridge's westbound closure has created significant traffic bottlenecks in both Providence and East Providence and will likely last through the end of the year. In addition to significantly hindering local residents, these traffic jams are already preventing customers, workers, and delivery drivers from accessing local businesses. These disruptions are particularly harmful now, as small businesses welcome holiday shoppers.

The holiday season is one of the busiest times of year for many local retailers. We are extremely concerned this disruption will substantially reduce small business revenues and significantly damage our local economy. As such, we urge you to promptly review any disaster request submitted by the State of Rhode Island and ensure that all eligible businesses receive the federal resources they deserve.

Thank you for SBA's longstanding work supporting communities impacted by disasters. We look forward to your prompt reply and your help ensuring all eligible Rhode Islanders receive federal assistance.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress