

July 9, 2014

The Honorable Mark Begich
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Begich:

Administrator Contreras-Sweet has asked me to respond to your recent inquiry regarding staffing at the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Alaska District Office. I look forward to working with you and your office on the many small business issues regarding growing small businesses in Alaska and across the country.

As you well know, small businesses significantly impact Alaska's economy and are crucial to the health and well-being of your beautiful state. Small businesses in Alaska represent 96.4 percent of all employers and employ 53 percent of the private sector labor force. Alaska small businesses numbered 69,201 and employed 134,485 in 2011.

We understand the unique importance of the SBA's 8(a) Business Development (BD) Program to Alaska, and in particular the Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs). The 8(a) BD Program is an essential instrument for helping socially and economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs gain access to the economic mainstream of American society. The 8(a) BD Program is also intended to foster regional or community economic development for firms owned by Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs), tribes, and Native-Hawaiian Organizations (NHOs).

We appreciate your concern about the need for additional staff in SBA's Alaska District Office. As outlined on a July 2, 2014, conference call with your staff, SBA is currently seeking to fill two open positions in the office. Once filled, we believe this will improve the Alaska District Office's capacity to serve small businesses, and will allow for more time to be dedicated to business development opportunities. Additionally, we are currently putting all of our Business Opportunity Specialists (BOS) through a rigorous training to help improve their knowledge and expertise in the Federal government contracting field. While staffing across the Agency is extremely tight, we understand the importance of having fully-staffed district offices and have made this a priority.

The Honorable Mark Begich

Page 2

We appreciate your support of SBA and Alaska's small business community. If you or your staff have any additional questions, please contact Mr. Nicholas Coutsos, Assistant Administrator for Congressional and Legislative Affairs, at (202) 205-6700.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Hill

Associate Administrator
Office of Field Operations