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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6350

July 29, 1999

The Honorable Aida Alvarez
Administrator
Small Business Administration
409 Third Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Ms. Alvarez:

It has been brought to our attention that administrative support that the Small Business Administration (Administration/SBA) provides to the SCORE Program has been reduced. The Small Business Committee (Committee) believes SCORE provides a very valuable service to our Nation's small business owners. This change is contrary to the intent expressed in the Committee Report that accompanied the 1997 re-authorization bill for SBA and is of great concern to us and other Members of the Committee.

During the Committee's deliberations on the Small Business Reauthorization Act of 1997 (S. 1139), the Committee approved unanimously a decision to increase the annual authorization for the SCORE Program. The Program was funded at $3.3 million for FY 1997, and the Committee decided to increase incrementally the annual authorization for SCORE to $5 million in FY 2000. This increase was approved by the House of Representatives and signed into law by the President.

In its Report accompanying S. 1139, the Committee stated that it did not want SBA to reduce support to the SCORE Program for direct, in-kind items such as providing office space and telephone and postage service. The authorization levels approved by the Congress for Fiscal Years 1998 - 2000 contemplated the continued support from SBA to SCORE, in addition to the direct appropriation amounts. As the Committee stated in its Report, we believe the withdrawal of this support will produce a severe hardship to the SCORE Program and the small businesses looking to SCORE for help.

It is our understanding the SBA's lack of funding of support services for the SCORE Program has caused money appropriated by Congress and intended to reimburse the expenses incurred by SCORE volunteers to be redirected to pay the costs of support services. As you know, SCORE workers are really "volunteers" and do not receive a stipend or other payment for their services. The money that Congress appropriates is intended to reimburse the volunteers for their travel and other out-of-pocket expenses and should be used for that purpose. SCORE volunteers should not be expected to pay these expenses. At a time increased funding is being

considered by the Congress for the Score Program, the SBA should not see this as an opportunity to reduce the Agency's support for SCORE, its 14,000 volunteers and the Nation's small business owners who rely heavily on the Program.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We would appreciate receiving a prompt reply from you on steps that can be taken to rectify this situation.

Sincerely,

John F. Kerry
Ranking Minority

Christopher S. Bond
Chairman