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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4209

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(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)

Alejandra Y. Castillo, Esq.
Director
Minority Business Development Agency
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Ms. Castillo:

I am writing to urge the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) to continue its partnership with the Memphis Business Center (MBC) and the MMBC Continuum.

As the only center in the State of Tennessee and one of two in the Mississippi Delta Region, the Memphis MBC touches a large population of scalable minority businesses that have significantly stimulated job creation, creating 1,173 jobs over the last three years.

The MBC has had record success achieving MBDA Performance Goals and promoting the mission and objectives of the MBDA. Over the past three years, the Memphis MBC earned a "Satisfactory" in year one and "Outstanding" in both years two and three. The center is on pace to earn another "Outstanding" in year four, with a current rating of 101 points. At the 2014 National MBDA Training Conference, the Memphis MBC was recognized as one of 24 centers earning the "Century Club" award for achieving a performance rating over 100 points.

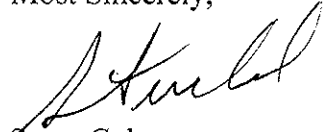
The Memphis MBC has strong partnerships with corporations, including Fortune 1000 companies based in the Memphis such as FedEx, AutoZone, and International Paper along with public sector agencies that are instrumental in the center's achievement of its awarded contracts and procurements goals. With renewal of the grant, the Memphis MBC can have greater economic impact.

In July 2015, the *Washington Post* and the *Commercial Appeal* detailed a new study by the bipartisan Economic Innovation Group that examined economic distress and inequality in large cities. Memphis is featured as number 1 for economic disparity and number 2 for economic distress. A MBDA Business Center in the Greater Memphis region is critically important to addressing economic disparities in our community.

I fully support the continued funding of the Memphis MBC and its operation by the MMBC Continuum. Please let me know how I can offer assistance to ensure the Memphis MBC remains an integral part of economic development in my district.

As always, I remain

Most Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Cohen", written in a cursive style.

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress