



The Honorable Mary L. Landrieu, Chair
The Honorable James E. Risch, Ranking Member
The Honorable Carl Levin
The Honorable Maria Cantwell
The Honorable Mark L. Pryor
The Honorable Ben L. Cardin
The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
The Honorable Kay Hagan
The Honorable Heidi Heitkamp
The Honorable Ed Markey
The Honorable Cory Booker
The Honorable David Vitter
The Honorable Marco Rubio
The Honorable Rand Paul
The Honorable Tim Scott
The Honorable Deb Fischer
The Honorable Mike Enzi
The Honorable Ron Johnson

Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship
United States Senate
428A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Strong Support for the Confirmation of Maria Contreras-Sweet to SBA Administrator

Dear Senators:

The Greenlining Institute and its coalition write to express strong support for the confirmation of Maria Contreras-Sweet to lead the Small Business Administration. We are confident that she understands the needs of small businesses and their role as the engine of our economy. From her experience creating her own business to serving small business owners, she is someone who understands the sector from all angles. Small businesses have been critical to our economic recovery, both as job creators and pillars of their communities. Our country needs the right person at the helm of the SBA.

Support from Many Different Stakeholders

Many policy makers and high level officials including President Obama, Senator Carl Levin, and Senator Mary Landrieu have praised Ms. Contreras-Sweet's abilities, proven track record, and



depth of experience in the small business sector. We whole heartedly agree with them and the many other voices that have supported her nomination.

Small Businesses are the Engine of Our Economy

The health of small businesses matters to communities everywhere, particularly in communities of color. Minority business enterprises (MBEs) are more likely to be small, but they are also resilient. Between 2002-2007, MBEs outpaced the growth of their white-owned counterparts;¹ however, they still saw fewer contracts with most large institutions and corporations. These businesses need continued and strong support from entities like the SBA.

When our small businesses do well, they generate wealth, create jobs, and families can live out their own version of the American Dream. Furthermore, these businesses hire and invest in their surrounding communities, jumpstarting opportunities for employment in communities with the highest levels of unemployment. Communities of color and other underserved communities need an SBA that factors in their unique experiences during policymaking. Just as we do, she believes that small businesses are “about family pride and supporting their community. It is what the American Dream is all about.”

Track Record of Excellence

Ms. Contreras-Sweet has amply demonstrated that she has what it takes to be the next Administrator of the SBA. As the founding chairwoman of ProAmerica Bank, the first Latino-owned business bank in California in over 30 years, she has seen the hard work and sacrifice necessary to start and run a successful business and has dedicated her career to empowering underserved entrepreneurs. She established herself as a trailblazer by becoming one of the first Latinas in the United States to found a publicly traded company.

She has also capably served in the public sector as Secretary of the California Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, where she focused on major job creation and public investments through infrastructure and housing. As a consultant, she helped companies expand into the growing Latino market. She has, in short, exactly the kind of experience that will help her make fair and inclusive policies and decisions that will assist the entire diverse community of small business owners. As she herself put it, “I am a small business owner whose small business helps small businesses every day.”

¹ Minority Business Development Agency, U.S. Department of Commerce, “Minority-Owned Business Growth & Global Reach.” Accessed at http://www.mbda.gov/sites/default/files/Minority-OwnedBusinessGrowthandGlobalReach_Final.pdf



An Opportunity to Add Diversity to the Cabinet

We applaud this excellent opportunity to add diversity to President Obama's second term cabinet. Communities of color will soon become the nation's new majority, making diversity a pressing mainstream issue. Ms. Contreras-Sweet is a first-generation American and Latina from California who knows exactly how small businesses create the American Dream for communities of color and other underserved communities. As she told your committee, "I experienced first-hand the challenges working families and recent immigrants are facing. My record of fighting for women and families stems from these experiences, and if confirmed, I will continue that mission."

Conclusion

The Greenlining Institute and the undersigned organizations fully support Ms. Contreras-Sweet to head the SBA and urge you to act swiftly to confirm her nomination.

In closing, we would like to thank Senator Mary Landrieu for her leadership as committee chair. Thank you for supporting small businesses, and the communities that depend on them. We also warmly welcome Senator Maria Cantwell and look forward to her vision and leadership as incoming chair.

Sincerely,

The Greenlining Institute
Andree Driskell & Associates
Asian Pacific Islander Small Business Program
Azul
Bridge Clinical Research
The California Hispanic Chambers of Commerce
California Journal For Filipino Americans
Chicana Latina Foundation
Council of Asian American Business Associations
Greater Phoenix Urban League
Hispanic Business, Education & Training
Inland Empire Latino Coalition
Kheir (Korean Health Education Information & Research) Center
Korean Churches for Community Development
National Federation of Filipino American Associations
Our Weekly



Renee Perez Associates
TELACU
Urban Media Foundation
West Angeles CDC
ZeZeN Advisors

cc. The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
The Honorable Robert Menendez