

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 9, 2024

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Financial Services and General Government
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Financial Services and General Government
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Van Hollen and Ranking Member Hyde-Smith:

As you begin drafting the Fiscal Year 2025 Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, we request that you include \$10 million for the Federal and State Technology (FAST) Partnership Program, in addition to report language directing the Small Business Administration (SBA) to prioritize FAST applicants in states that have historically received the fewest Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) awards. Robust funding and better targeted evaluation criteria will expand the reach of the FAST program and enable more small businesses in hard-to-reach communities and rural areas to access SBIR and STTR funding.

Small businesses are the engine of our economy, driving innovation, creating jobs, and bolstering local economic growth. In addition to their contributions to our communities, small businesses also play a key role in solving society's most pressing challenges and maintaining our nation's global technology leadership. The SBIR and STTR competitive grant programs are an important source of capital for small businesses that invest in research and development (R&D) and work to bring new technologies to market. In 2023, over \$4.5 billion in early-stage seed capital was provided through 6,300 awards to more than 3,500 businesses. However, some states are not receiving their fair share of this federal R&D funding.


The FAST program was created to address this gap. FAST provides one-year funding to SBA resource partners, educational institutions, and other economic development entities to increase the number of SBIR and STTR proposals from underrepresented businesses in their state. By supporting technical assistance, outreach, financial support, and mentoring efforts through these organizations, FAST works to ensure that all businesses have the resources they need to access SBIR and STTR awards. In the 2023 funding round, 44 states received FAST awards of up to \$125,000 each, totaling over \$5.4 million.

The FAST program's mission to strengthen the competitiveness of underserved businesses seeking SBIR and STTR grants is critical. However, the current application process disadvantages states that historically lack SBIR and STTR awards, as there is no prioritization of applicants from underperforming states. To better reach the small businesses FAST was created to serve, we urge the Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government to include the following report language in its forthcoming legislation:

The Committee recognizes the important role of the Federal and State Technology Partnership Program in helping underserved entrepreneurs successfully compete for Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) awards, especially in states that have historically lacked SBIR and STTR awards. Therefore, the Committee directs the Administrator to prioritize and offer additional assistance to FAST applicants that are located in an underperforming state, as funding allows. An underperforming state is a state participating in the SBIR or STTR program that has been calculated by the Administrator to be one of eighteen states receiving the fewest SBIR and STTR Phase I awards.

Thank you for your attention to this important program. We look forward to working with you and appreciate your consideration.


Sincerely,



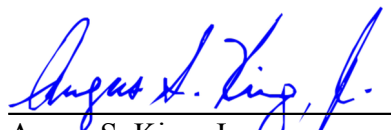
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



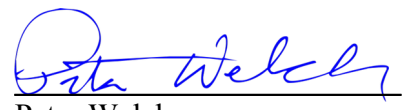
James E. Risch
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator