

Senator Joni Ernst
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business
and Entrepreneurship
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20002

Senator Ed Markey
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business
and Entrepreneurship
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20002

September 30, 2025

Dear Chair Ernst and Ranking Member Markey:

On behalf of the undersigned businesses and organizations, we urge Congress to swiftly extend the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs given a lapse on October 1. A short-term extension would provide the time needed for continued bipartisan negotiations on reauthorization while ensuring that these vital programs do not experience a damaging interruption.

For more than four decades, SBIR and STTR have been among the most effective federal programs for driving innovation, strengthening U.S. competitiveness, and fostering high-quality job creation. These programs fund breakthrough technologies developed by small businesses across every state, serving the mission needs of federal agencies while catalyzing private-sector growth. Allowing a lapse—even a brief one—would risk undermining research pipelines, disrupt partnerships, and send a message of uncertainty to the very companies driving U.S. innovation.

We recognize that important negotiations are ongoing between Democratic and Republican members of Congress over how best to reauthorize these programs. While these differing proposals may not align on every legislative detail, they each share a common interest in avoiding a lapse and ensuring that any long-term reauthorization preserves what has made SBIR and STTR successful.

We support provisions that:

- Provide long-term certainty for the programs, ideally permanent reauthorization, so small businesses can plan with confidence.
- Ensure sufficient allocation levels that reflect the programs' proven return on taxpayer investment.
- Improve commercialization pathways, such as strengthening and expanding Phase III opportunities and agency support to help bridge the "valley of death."
- Support efforts to strengthen recruitment and support of new applicants and simplify application processes.
- Prevent agencies from placing unreasonable limits on indirect cost rates.

At the same time, we urge caution in adopting any provisions that would undermine participation in SBIR/STTR, such as:

- Narrowing eligibility in ways that exclude capable and innovative small businesses.
- Imposing duplicative or overly burdensome compliance, audit, or reporting mandates.

- Creating unnecessary hurdles for venture-backed or other qualified small businesses that have proven track records of innovation.
- Adding administrative requirements that increase red tape without improving accountability or outcomes.

In short, we urge Congress to act without delay to extend the SBIR/STTR programs ahead of the September 30 deadline. This extension would safeguard continuity for America's innovation ecosystem while providing negotiators with the time and space needed to reconcile differences in reauthorization proposals.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and for your longstanding bipartisan support of America's small business innovators.

Sincerely,

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