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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6350

January 24, 2008

The Honorable Steven Preston  
Administrator  
U.S. Small Business Administration  
409 Third Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20416

Dear Administrator Preston:

Early Monday morning, a wind-driven fire that started inside a nightclub undergoing renovations leveled most of a city block in the town of Lawrence, Massachusetts. The block included early 1900s triple-decker wood frames, a hair salon, and three buildings being rehabilitated by Habitat for Humanity. Preliminary damage reports indicate that the blaze damaged or destroyed 15 buildings on three streets, and left at least 150 people homeless before firefighters from 13 communities were able to control the blaze. These buildings included major damage to 33 homes, 9 businesses and 1 non profit as well as minor damage to 17 homes and 1 business. These numbers clearly fall well beyond the threshold for a disaster declaration.

We are appreciative of the efforts made by Governor Patrick to certify this tragedy as a physical disaster for the purposes of authorizing federally-administered low interest disaster loans to the victims of the fire. We encourage you to do everything in your power to provide low interest loans through SBA's disaster assistance program, and to do so as quickly as possible. The victims of the Lawrence fire deserve nothing less than a swift and effective response from the federal agency responsible for providing disaster assistance to small business owners. We pledge you our support in doing whatever it will take to ensure that the homes and businesses destroyed Monday morning are given every opportunity to rebuild and thrive.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us or a member of our staffs. We look forward to working with you and with your staff to ensure a speedy recovery for the business owners impacted by Monday's tragedy.

Sincerely,



John F. Kerry  
US Senator



Edward M. Kennedy  
US Senator



Niki Tsongas  
US Representative