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## United States Senate

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

July 23, 2007

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

Dear Administrator Preston:

Early Saturday morning, an eight-alarm fire engulfed the Bernat Mill Complex in the town of Uxbridge, Massachusetts. Preliminary damage reports indicate that 135 homes and small businesses were damaged or destroyed before firefighters from 45 communities were able to control the blaze.

This terrible tragedy has upended an entire community. Built in 1820, the Bernat Mill has served the town of Uxbridge for nearly two centuries as a dependable source of economic stability. During World War II, the Mill was used to make fabric for army uniforms. Until Saturday's fire, the Mill housed the dreams and aspirations of some of Massachusetts' most creative entrepreneurs. Now, these small business owners find their world turned upside-down, and every step needs to be taken to ensure that they receive the help they need to get back on their feet.

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 Bernat Mill Complex 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 businesses destroyed Saturday 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 Saturday's tragedy.

Sincerely,

  
John F. Kerry

  
Edward M. Kennedy

  
Richard Neal