

Steny Hoyer & Chris Palombi's View on Small Business

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Candidates Support Help For Small Businesses.

Small businesses in Maryland's 5th District and across the country have struggled due to COVID-19 restrictions. Congressman Steny Hoyer and challenger, Chris Palombi, both agree that more needs to be done to help this vital part of the economy.

Hoyer said the COVID-19 crisis is like nothing the country has experienced before. "You and I and all of our friends and neighbors are living through a crisis in America that we've never experienced before. And that sounds like a pretty big statement. We had a national Depression back in the 30s. We've gone through WWII, WWI, The Civil War... We've never shut down our economy. Never, through all those crises. This crisis, in effect, shut our economy down. We said, 'You cannot operate. You cannot have people coming into your business; you cannot operate your business.' So, we had millions of people laid off. And small businesses, of course, took one of the biggest hits. By virtue of being small, they had a relatively small volume of business to pay their overhead to pay their salaries."

Palombi expressed concerns that orders to shut down businesses disproportionately hurt small businesses. "I have great compassion for a lot of the small business owners and their employees throughout the district because they were forced to shut down. Their livelihoods were greatly affected by the pandemic. Big companies like Walmart, and Target, and Amazon were able to stay open, but small businesses were told to shut down."

PPP Helped Protect Jobs

Hoyer said Congress responded with money for small businesses. "We started responding some months ago, in March. And we appropriated dollars. Small dollars. Interestingly, we call 8.3 billion dollars small dollars. They are obviously gargantuan dollars, but they are small dollars in the face of a 25 trillion dollar economy that had to be propped up. So, we passed a lot of other pieces of legislation. One was the CARES Act. And literally put 300 billion dollars plus into trying to help small businesses. A program that we've called the Payroll Protection Plan."

The PPP offers loans to businesses to pay employees during the COVID shutdown. Those loans later convert to grants.

Palombi agreed that the PPP was necessary. "I do agree that the PPP program that the federal government helped out with the loans to the state was a great benefit. Because of that, we had many small business owners that were able to maintain their employees. They were able to survive throughout the summer. So, that's a great program that was there."

Getting Back On Track

However, legislation that offered additional assistance to small businesses has stalled. Hoyer said, "So, in the Heroes Act that is pending, we passed on May 15, four months ago, and the Senate, unfortunately, hasn't passed that bill. We put additional money in and we passed that bill and we extended the time frame for that program. Unfortunately, that bill hasn't passed and that program has expired."

Hoyer said that despite the reopening of the economy, small businesses are fighting to survive. "Now we've opened a lot in this state and around the country. But they're still struggling and we need to help them. Because small businesses are the bulwark of any economy. Yes, the large businesses, they hire tens of thousands of people. But ultimately, the shoemaker, the barber, the grocer, you know, the real estate broker, the single practitioner doctor or lawyer... they are small businesses. We need to keep them going so that when we get a vaccine people feel comfortable about participating robustly in the economy again."

Palombi also expressed hope that the worst is over. "Hopefully, the numbers continue to decline and we can move on and get past this pandemic and this virus. Like I said, we're on the right track and we need to work and continue to find ways to increase consumer confidence and spur new job creation which will shore up existing small businesses while maintaining everybody's safety as well."

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