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\$1.7 Million, Requested by Congressman Higgins for Small Business Development in Western New York, Advances in Committee

Funding Would Boost West Side Bazaar Expansion, Provide E-Commerce Support through the SUNY Buffalo State Small Business Development Center

Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-26) announced [federal legislation](#), which includes \$1.7 million to help small businesses in Western New York, has crossed an initial legislative hurdle. A House Appropriations subcommittee approved a bill including \$950,000 for the Westminster Economic Development Initiative (WEDI) to support expansion of the West Side Bazaar and \$750,000 for the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at SUNY Buffalo State to help small businesses in Western New York expand e-commerce and grow an online presence.

Higgins said, "Small business development and growth will be a necessary driver of employment opportunity and regional economic recovery. Buffalo was the talk of the nation pre-pandemic and it can be again through efforts like this that help entrepreneurs hit the ground running."

WEDI Executive Director Carolynn Welch said, "The West Side Bazaar business incubator is a community resource unlike anything else in Buffalo, offering a program and a place for economically underserved entrepreneurs to test their businesses and a gathering space for neighbors, locals, and tourists. Our planned expansion will quadruple what we can offer to all. If approved, \$950,000 will help equip the new West

Side Bazaar with modern kitchens for food prep, service, and storage for the Bazaar's popular international food court and marketplace. We aim for equity in WNY by supporting disadvantaged, enthusiastic entrepreneurs as they build toward their own brick and mortar establishments and realize financial security. West Side Bazaar is a place of pride for Buffalonians which demonstrates our region's commitment to a thriving and equitable small-business eco-system. We are grateful to Rep. Higgins for his leadership and for recognizing the value of the Bazaar not just for small business owners but for our entire city."

The [SBDC](#) at SUNY Buffalo State has been a critical resource for start-up and existing small businesses in Erie and Niagara Counties. The SBDC Buffalo team ramped up assistance to entrepreneurs throughout the pandemic, assisting small business owners with navigating complex COVID relief opportunities and helping local operators transition to online business delivery. The \$750,000 in additional funding would allow SBDC Buffalo to expand in-depth technical e-commerce assistance for minority, women and disadvantaged Western New York businesses. Services might include building an interactive e-commerce website, graphically designing and creating content for business websites, determining an appropriate payment platform, and monitoring the businesses application and usage of e-commerce, all toward the goal of boosting business opportunity and growth.

Dr. Susan McCartney, Director of the Buffalo State Small Business

Development Center said, "As a direct result of pandemic, the entrepreneurial economic divide is E-Commerce. Small and disadvantaged businesses must fast forward their e-commerce strategy immediately. What would have been a far more gradual transition to on-line business practices, is an essential business practice – NOW. For our small businesses to survive 2021 and on, they must transition. It is our goal to make that happen."

Each year Congress adopts 12 appropriation bills providing annual funding for federal programs and priorities ranging from health and education to transportation and urban development. Congressman Higgins submitted several projects important to Western New York to the House Appropriations Committee for consideration. The Financial Services and General Government Funding bill released this week includes the SBDC and WEDI funding. The bill, which authorizes \$29.1 billion in funding, an increase of \$4.8 billion over fiscal year 2021, incorporates additional priorities supported by Congressman Higgins and important to Western New York including:

- \$330 million for Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) to support economic growth in distressed communities by providing lending to community members with limited access to traditional banking options. WEDI, Launch NY and Seneca Nation Economic Development are eligible for funding and [awarded CDFI resources](#) to provide direct funding to small business assistance earlier this month.

- \$13.6 billion for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), an increase of \$1.7 billion to administer the expanded [Child Tax Credit](#) and improve taxpayer services.
- \$1 billion for the Small Business Administration including \$140 million for Small Business Development Centers and \$26 million for Women’s Business Centers. Western New York is home to SBDCs available to help local business owners at sites operating out of [SUNY Buffalo State](#) and [Niagara County Community College](#) as well as a [Women’s Business Center](#) at Canisius College. _
- \$300 million for the Electric Vehicle Fund for the electrification of the federal fleet.

The subcommittee action to advance the bill is just the first of several steps in the legislative process. The House and Senate are expected to pass appropriation bills in committee over the next few weeks. The specifics of the bills, including community funded projects will be negotiated between the House and Senate in the months ahead with the goal of gaining full House and Senate approval before the federal fiscal year ends on September 30, 2021.

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