

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 23, 2018

Stephen H. Bryant  
President and Chief Operating Officer  
Columbia Gas of Massachusetts  
4 Technology Drive  
Westborough, MA 01581

Joseph Hamrock  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
NiSource  
801 E. 86th Avenue  
Merrillville, IN 46410

Dear Mr. Bryant and Mr. Hamrock,

We write to urge you to continue and expand your commitment to the small businesses of the Merrimack Valley affected by the September 13 explosions and subsequent loss of gas service. Small businesses bring necessary goods and services, employment opportunities, and economic benefits that serve as the lifeblood of a community. Whether it is a first-generation business or one that has been in the same family for generations, these businesses matter deeply to the owners, employees, and local patrons.

For a small business, even one day of lost business can make it hard to stay afloat. Some of these businesses have already been without gas service for more than a month, and may have to wait another full month before service returns. A report submitted to the Small Business Association last week identified 80 businesses that have not been able to open since the explosion due to inadequate gas service. Meanwhile, they still have to pay for rent, employee salaries, health insurance, pre-scheduled deliveries, phone service, and other operating expenses. At the same time, the communities have lost access to goods and services.

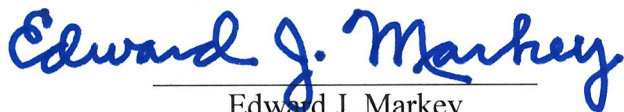
Additionally, the report identified at least five businesses that estimate at least a 40 percent loss in gross revenue due to the explosion. While the Commonwealth has applied for recovery funding to the Small Business Association through their Economic Injury Disaster Loan program, it is imperative that you continue to commit resources to helping this community and the local economy rebuild.

While we know you have committed to making everyone affected by the disaster financially whole, we encourage you to hasten your work with local entities and be creative in your efforts to address the long-term damage done to small businesses. From the immigrant entrepreneurs of South Lawrence to the Main Streets of Andover and North Andover, these businesses are the

lifeline of the Merrimack Valley. They employ, feed, and provide services to our neighbors, and we need to make sure they can continue to do so.

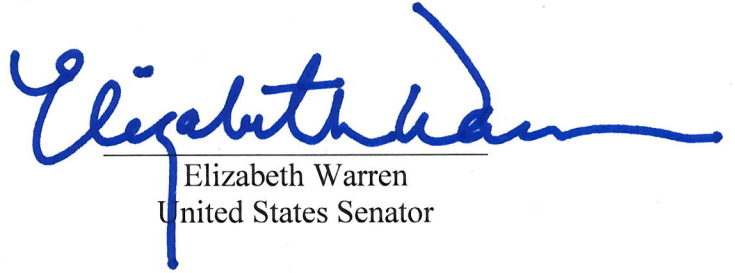
We will be watching your actions closely throughout this process to ensure that the needs of our local businesses are neither forgotten nor overlooked.

Sincerely,



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator