

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2026

The Honorable Kelly Loeffler  
Administrator  
U.S. Small Business Administration  
409 3<sup>rd</sup> Street S.W.  
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Administrator Loeffler,

We write to thank you for your attention to the constant pollution flowing into San Diego from Mexico and its impact on small businesses and the regional economy. We were encouraged by your recent visit to the region on 02/05/26 and by Deputy Administrator William Briggs visit on 03/31/26, where you both reaffirmed the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) commitment to supporting small local businesses impacted by the transboundary pollution flow.<sup>1</sup> We are writing to ask that the Administration continues to work with us to address this crisis and its impact on South San Diego County communities and businesses.

San Diego County's beaches play a vital economic role for the region, creating hundreds of jobs, attracting thousands of tourists, and creating economic opportunities for businesses. According to a recent report from the San Diego Tourism Authority, tourists to the region have spent a record \$14.8 billion in 2025.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the communities in South San Diego County have not been able to fully take advantage of these economic opportunities because of the ongoing sewage crisis.

As you may know, cross-border sewage pollution in the Tijuana River Valley has harmed public health, local economies, and ecosystems in South San Diego County for decades. Small businesses in the region constantly suffer economic losses each year due to the lack of tourism in the South Bay, caused by sewage pollution. With summer approaching, many beach communities in South San Diego County are anticipating a fifth straight summer of beach closures due to dangerous levels of bacteria found in the water from the Tijuana River.<sup>3</sup> These closures have had a damaging impact on the small businesses that rely on tourism from beachgoers.

As South San Diego County's beaches continue to be impacted by untreated wastewater, sediment, and trash from the Tijuana River, South Bay businesses have suffered economically as tourists choose beaches further up the coast. While we continue to work with our Mexican counterparts to address the causes of the pollution, it's important that we also take steps to support local small businesses impacted by the pollution and the consumers who rely on them.

To better support small businesses in South San Diego County that are struggling, we request responses to the following questions:

1. What steps has the SBA taken, or does it plan to take, to aid small businesses struggling due to a long-term environmental issue, such as transboundary pollution?

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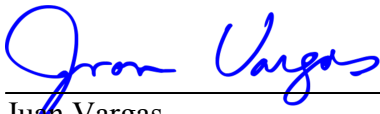
<sup>1</sup> Armstrong Walker "Feds visit Imperial Beach to assess economic toll of Tijuana River pollution crisis" *Tribune*, The San Diego Union Tribune, 31 March 2026, available at, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2026/03/31/feds-visit-imperial-beach-to-assess-economic-toll-of-tijuana-river-pollution-crisis/>

<sup>2</sup> "San Diego Tourism Fast Facts and Industry Insights." *San Diego Tourism Authority*, 30 April 2026, available at, <https://www.sandiego.org/about/san-diego-tourism-fast-facts>

<sup>3</sup> Fudge Thomas "San Diego beach closures, advisories posted as July Fourth holiday approaches" KPBS, 2 July 2025, available at, <https://www.kpbs.org/news/environment/2025/07/02/san-diego-beach-closures-advisories-posted-as-july-fourth-holiday-approaches>

2. How can SBA use its existing footprint or programming to specifically address this small business issue?
3. Has the local Small Business Development Center (SBDC) collected data on the effects of pollution events on small businesses, or does it plan to do so? Has the SBA collected, or does it plan to collect, data on how transboundary pollution has impacted small businesses in South San Diego in particular?
4. How can Congress assist the SBA in providing the tools it needs to better support small businesses struggling due to transboundary pollution and other pollution events?
5. Would a federal emergency declaration give the SBA more tools to support businesses impacted by this pollution? If so, how?

Sincerely,



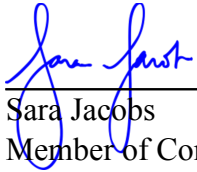
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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



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Mike Levin  
Member of Congress



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Sara Jacobs  
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Scott H. Peters  
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