

(<https://www.bluntrochester.senate.gov>)



**LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER,
SENATOR FOR DELAWARE**

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**Blunt Rochester,
Cantwell, Baldwin
Demand Answers
on Lutnick's Failure
to Protect Minority
Business
Development
Agency**

As Trump tariffs batter U.S. economy, Lutnick RIFs entire agency that helps boost minority entrepreneurship, ignite economic opportunity & create jobs in rural, suburban & urban communities across the country

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senators Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-Del.), member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), Ranking Member of the Committee, and Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) wrote to Trump Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick demanding documents and full accounting of his actions to shutter the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) despite vowing not to support efforts to dismantle it. Today's letter follows a **March 24 letter from Sens. Blunt Rochester and Cantwell, (<https://www.commerce.senate.gov/2025/3/cantwell-blunt-rochester-demand-commerce-secretary-lutnick-protect-minority-business-development-agency-from-trump-s-overreach>)**, warning Lutnick of the devastating impacts a reduction in force would have on small businesses and the nation's economy.

“Since sending that letter, our offices have received information indicating the Trump Administration sent reduction-in-force (RIF) notices to every MBDA employee—effectively shuttering an agency that Congress has authorized,” **the senators wrote**. “If true, this action would not only prevent MBDA from

successfully carrying out its congressionally mandated programs and duties; it would appear to contradict the testimony you provided during your confirmation hearing.”

During his confirmation hearing before the Commerce Committee, Lutnick said he did not support dismantling the agency which was created by President Nixon in 1969 and codified into law by Congress with bipartisan support in 2021. The MBDA is responsible for promoting the growth and global competitiveness of minority owned businesses, including by assisting these businesses with access to capital, contracts, markets and business networks through partnerships with private and public entities. In Fiscal Year 2024 alone, the MBDA helped the country’s more than 12 million minority businesses access over \$1.5 billion in capital and create or retain approximately 23,000 jobs.

The full letter is below and **[here](https://www.commerce.senate.gov/services/files/42A5A36AB6C-474F-ADB7-19520F7CCD4E)** (**<https://www.commerce.senate.gov/services/files/42A5A36AB6C-474F-ADB7-19520F7CCD4E>**).

Secretary Lutnick:

In a letter sent on March 25, 2025
(<https://www.commerce.senate.gov/2025/3/cantwell-blunt-rochester-demand-commerce-secretary-lutnick-protect-minority-business-development-agency-from-trump-s-overreach>), you were urged to honor your

testimony before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation affirming you do not support efforts to dismantle the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA).^[1]

(about:blank%23_ftn1) Since sending that letter, our offices have received information indicating the Trump Administration sent reduction-in-force (RIF) notices to every MBDA employee—effectively shuttering an agency that Congress has authorized. If true, this action would not only prevent MBDA from successfully carrying out its congressionally mandated programs and duties; it would appear to contradict the testimony you provided during your confirmation hearing. Accordingly, we demand a clear and complete explanation of your Department’s actions regarding the MBDA.

As explained in the March 25, 2025, letter, the MBDA is a vital driver of economic growth for America’s minority-owned businesses.^[2]

(about:blank%23_ftn2) Congress statutorily authorized the agency in a bipartisan manner in 2021 to ensure American entrepreneurs facing historical barriers to business ownership had access to key tools and resources to spur innovation, open new businesses, and create good-paying jobs. In Fiscal Year 2024 alone, the MBDA helped the country’s more than 12 million minority businesses access over \$1.5 billion in capital and create or retain approximately 23,000 jobs.^[3]

(about:blank%23_ftn3) Mindful of the MBDA’s

record of success and congressional mandate, we urged you not to move forward with a RIF that would reduce MBDA's personnel to as few as 3 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees.

Alarming, information provided to our offices makes clear the RIF your Department initiated at the MBDA was even more sweeping than we had feared, leaving the agency with effectively no staff. As a result, it is unclear to whom, if anyone, MBDA Business Centers are reporting or who is currently implementing MBDA's congressionally mandated programs and duties. Your Department appears to have dismantled the MBDA without any act of Congress—disregarding the programs and initiatives the Administration is directed by statute to implement.

The Commerce Committee has a duty to conduct oversight of the agencies and programs under its jurisdiction to ensure they are implemented and operating as Congress intended. Accordingly, please provide the following documents and information no later than May 1, 2025:

1. A complete description of the current staffing at MBDA, including the number of FTE employees presently working at the agency (if any), how many FTE employees are presently on administrative leave, and how many MBDA FTE employees have

been sent RIF notices since January 20, 2025.

2. Copies of all RIF notices sent to MBDA FTE employees since January 20, 2025.
3. A complete description of all actions taken by the Department to comply with President Trump's March 14, 2025, executive order, "Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy."
4. A copy of the report required in the above-referenced March 14, 2025, Executive Order from MBDA to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget confirming compliance with the Executive Order and explaining which of its components or functions are statutorily required and to what extent.
5. An explanation of how the Department's actions regarding the MBDA are consistent with the Administration's statutory obligations under the Minority Business Development Act of 2021 (Division K of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, P.L. 117-58).
6. An explanation of how the Department's actions regarding the MBDA during your tenure as Commerce Secretary are consistent with your testimony to the Commerce Committee on January 29, 2025, and in your responses to the corresponding questions for the record. In your response, please specifically address the testimony you provided when asked if you support dismantling the MBDA, to which you responded, "I do not."

Sincerely,

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Senator Lisa Blunt Rochester represents Delaware in the United States Senate where she serves on the Committees on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Commerce, Science, and Transportation; Environment and Public Works; and Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

[1] (about:blank%23_ftnref1) Hearing, “Nomination Hearing – U.S. Secretary of Commerce”, *U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation*, (Jan. 29, 2025); **https://www.commerce.senate.gov/2025/1/full-committee-nomination-hearing_2_3** (**https://www.commerce.senate.gov/2025/1/full-committee-nomination-hearing_2_3**).

[2] (about:blank%23_ftnref2) Press Release, “Cantwell, Blunt Rochester Demand Commerce Secretary Lutnick Protect Minority Business Development Agency from Trump’s Overreach”, *U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation*, (Mar. 24, 2025); **<https://www.commerce.senate.gov/2025/3/cantwell-blunt-rochester-demand-commerce-secretary-lutnick-protect-minority-business-development-agency-from-trump-s-overreach>**

(<https://www.commerce.senate.gov/2025/3/cantwell-blunt-rochester-demand-commerce-secretary-lutnick-protect-minority-business-development-agency-from-trump-s-overreach>).

[3] (about:blank%23_ftnref3). “Annual Performance Summary, Fiscal Year 2024,” *Minority Business Development Agency*, (accessed Mar. 24, 2025); **<https://www.mbda.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/fy-2024-annual-performance-report.pdf>** (**<https://www.mbda.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/fy-2024-annual-performance-report.pdf>**).

Washington, DC

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P# 202-224-2441



Map (/map-1)

Wilmington, DE

Coming soon
302-573-6291



[Map \(/map-2\)](/map-2)

Dover, DE

555 East Loockerman
Street, Suite 300
Dover, DE 19901
P# 302-674-3308



[Map \(/map-3\)](/map-3)

Georgetown, DE

12 The Circle
Georgetown, DE 19947
302-856-7690



[Map \(/map-4\)](/map-4)

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