

Honorable Congresswomen and Congressmen,

I am honored to be here and thank you for allowing me to come before you today as a representative of small businesses across the United States.

I am the owner of a small animal veterinary practice in Lebanon, Ohio. I have been the owner of Four Paws Animal Hospital since January of 2007. My wife, Jen, and I purchased the practice from another veterinarian and quickly made it our own. At the time of purchase, the practice was a single doctor practice with 3 employees and now we have expanded to become a 5 doctor practice with 34 employees. In 2012, we moved from a stripmall store to our own state of the art 5400 sq ft stand-alone building in the heart of the Lebanon business corridor. Over the last few years, we have seen an amazing level of growth from a client standpoint as well as a revenue standpoint. Over the last few years of prosperity, we have been able to give raises, purchase equipment and add additional staff members.

In March, that all changed. COVID-19 hit the United States and people were asked to stay home. Ohio was one of the earliest states to shut down. Fortunately for us, we were deemed "an essential business" and we still were able to operate as a veterinary hospital but with severe restrictions in place. We had to reinvent how to practice veterinary medicine and still keep the staff and clients safe. Because of these restrictions, we went from monthly continuous growth numbers to being down nearly 30%. We were fearful that at any time, we would have to shut down the hospital if any of the staff were to fall ill from the coronavirus.

We first heard about the PPP loans on the national news and I immediately reached out to our local bank to start the wheels in motion. I stayed in contact with them and asked for any information that they were getting as far as what the application would look like. I filled out sample applications, had my numbers confirmed by my accountant, and tried to get any documentation that was needed together for when the loans were approved by Congress, the SBA and the President. Once the bank let me know that the applications were ready, I filled them out and submitted everything the next day. The bank kept me in the loop with where we stood in the approval process and once the approval occurred, we were very quick to get documents signed. Within the week, we had our PPP loan funds.

I can not say enough about the way that Congress and the SBA got such a huge undertaking done so quickly. The funds were exactly what our business needed to make up the shortfall in revenue and allow us to keep all of our employees. We did not lay off any of the staff and everyone was able to keep their hours if they were able to come to work. A few staff members had to stay home for two week quarantines, due to the unknown nature of things in the early stages. We asked anyone with a fever or cough to stay home for those 14 days, but no one in the hospital tested positive for COVID-19 and everyone was able to return to work.

The only concern we had with the loan process was that the loan documents that were signed did not have language in them that discussed the loan forgiveness. We were signing a loan

with good faith that the government would honor their word and forgive the PPP loan. I looked at the loan as a lifeboat that my business needed to provide for my staff and my family. If the loan was forgiven, it would be a godsend. If the loan was not, then at least I had a government loan with reasonable terms to get us through this unusual time. Our loan was funded during the first phase and we received \$206,000. The interesting part was that I saw a stat that said the average loan amount was \$206,000. I joked with my wife that we owned America's most average business.

Our 8 week loan period actually ends today on June 17th. We have elected to extend that to the 24 weeks as allowed by the new provisions passed 2 weeks ago. We opened an account that was only to be used for the PPP loan funds. That way there was complete transparency as far as where every dollar was being used. Our business has rebounded and we are digging out. We still are not practicing veterinary medicine the way that I have for the last 18 years. We are currently doing car calls, with the clients staying out of the hospital, and only the pets coming in. It is a new business model and my staff has been amazing in completely reinventing ourselves. I can not thank them enough for getting OUR veterinary hospital and all of our patients and clients through these tough times.

Again, I cannot thank Congress enough for providing the funds that all of the small businesses in the US need to survive in this time of uncertainty. I feel that the loan process could not have gone any smoother than it did. Congress is known for doing things at glacial speed and I was amazed at how quickly this came together. It is amazing what can be accomplished when we all work together. I would like to thank our local community bank, Lebanon Citizen National Bank, for making the process as easy as possible under the circumstances and my accountant, Pelfrey and Associates, for helping navigate through the application process.

Thank you again for having me today and allowing me to tell my story. Because of the bipartisan efforts of Congress, the 34 staff members at Four Paws Animal Hospital were able to go home every night knowing that they could pay their rent, feed their family, and more importantly feed the massive amount of the pets that they own.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rich Coleman', written over a horizontal line.

Rich Coleman, D.V.M.
Four Paws Animal Hospital
Lebanon, Ohio