

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
2561 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6515

August 13, 2018

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Intellectual property plays an important role in protecting the new and innovative ideas that drive our nation's economy. This is no less true for our nation's small businesses and entrepreneurs that are responsible for creating almost two-thirds of the new jobs over the last two decades. Small businesses that have intellectual property protections earn 32 percent more in revenue, on average, per employee compared to similar businesses with no such protections according to one study.¹ Another recent study found that patents have a causal impact on the growth potential of startup companies, helping them to "create jobs, grow their sales, innovate, and eventually succeed," and that a delay in a patent grant can slow the benefit of each of these.²

However, many small business owners are not always aware of the need to protect their innovations with intellectual property. And when they decide to pursue intellectual property protections, the process can be expensive, confusing, and time-consuming. While there are federal resources available to help entrepreneurs and small businesses obtain intellectual property protections, such as the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's Patent Pro Se Assistance program, it is unclear to what extent small businesses are aware of and take advantage of these resources.

To better understand the resources available to help small businesses and entrepreneurs obtain intellectual property protections, the Committee requests that GAO study:

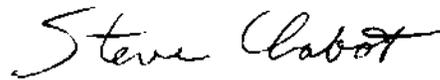
¹ OFFICE FOR HARMONIZATION IN THE INTERNAL MKT., INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AND FIRM PERFORMANCE IN EUROPE: AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS 9, 58 (June 2015), available at <https://euipo.europa.eu/ohimportal/documents/11370/80606/Intellectual+property+rights+and+firm+performance+in+Europe>.

² Joan Farre-Mensa et al., *The Bright Side of Patents 2* (U.S. Patent & Trademark Office, Economic Working Paper No. 2015-5), available at <https://www.uspto.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Patents%20030216%20USPTO%20Cover.pdf>.

1. What is known about whether entrepreneurs and small businesses are aware of federal resources to help them obtain patents and other intellectual property protections, and how often are they used by these groups?
2. To what extent are federal programs to help small businesses obtain intellectual property coordinated across federal agencies?
3. What is known about the intellectual property resources for small businesses that are available outside of the federal government?

We appreciate your attention to this request. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact Stephanie Fekete, Counsel for the Committee, at 202-225-5821.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Chabot". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Chabot
Chairman
House Committee on Small Business