

GOOD MORNING!

IT'S AN HONOR TO WELCOME TO MIAMI-DADE COUNTY SBA ADMINITRATOR MRS. MARIA CONTRERAS-SWEET TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK.

I CAN'T THINK OF A BETTER PLACE TO KICK OFF NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK THAN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY.

I WANT TO THANK EVERYONE INVOLVED IN ORGANIZING OUR TOUR THROUGH INSIGHT DESIGN, A U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL MEMBER COMMITTED TO WORKING TO TRANSFORM THE WAY BUILDINGS AND COMMUNITIES ARE DESIGNED, BUILT AND OPERATED, TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE.

THANK YOU ALL.

WE ARE A COMMUNITY WHERE THE AMERICAN DREAM OF OWNING YOUR BUSINESS, OF BEING YOUR OWN BOSS, IS VERY MUCH ALIVE.

SMALL BUSINESSES MAKE UP THE BACKBONE OF OUR ECONOMY HERE IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, SO

THEIR SUCCESS TRANSLATES DIRECTLY TO THE WELLBEING OF OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

ALTHOUGH MUCH OF THE ATTENTION OUR COUNTY RECEIVES IS FOCUSED ON BIG TICKET EVENTS, THERE IS A THRIVING SMALL BUSINESS SECTOR THAT KEEPS OUR LOCAL ECONOMY MOVING.

MANY OF THE BUSINESSES HELP SUPPORT OUR HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRY, WHICH WELCOMED A RECORD 14.6 MILLION OVERNIGHT VISITORS IN 2014, AS WELL AS OUR ECONOMIC ENGINES OF MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND PORTMIAMI. APPROXIMATELY 600,000 JOBS IN OUR COMMUNITY ARE TO SUPPORT OPERATIONS AT MIA AND OUR SEAPORT.

WE ARE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO CREATE THE CLIMATE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY WHERE THE ENTREPRENEURS OF TODAY WILL PROSPER, AND THE BUSINESSES OF TOMORROW WILL BE CREATED.

WE ARE DOING THIS BY INCREASING OUR FOCUS AND INVESTMENTS IN ALL THE THINGS THAT ADD VALUE TO THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF A COMMUNITY.

OUR COUNTY WIDE INFRASTRUCTURE – INCLUDING OUR AIRPORT, PORTMIAMI, AND OUR WATER AND SEWER DEPARTMENT – ARE ALL RECEIVING UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF INVESTMENTS.

AND THESE INVESTMENTS ARE KEY TO BOOSTING THE BOTTOM LINE OF OUR BUSINESSES.

WE ARE FOCUSED ON AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY SUCH AS OUR TECHNOLOGY SECTOR, WHERE WE HAVE SEEN TREMENDOUS GROWTH, ESPECIALLY DUE TO OUR CLOSE CONNECTIONS WITH LATIN AMERICA.

WE ARE PARTNERING WITH OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES TO SUPPORT THIS FAST-GROWING SECTOR.

AND WE ARE ALSO SUPPORTING TECHNOLOGY VENTURES SUCH AS THE START-UP INCUBATOR “VENTURE HIVE” AS WELL AS THE “EMERGE AMERICAS” CONFERENCE TAKING PLACE RIGHT NOW IN MIAMI BEACH.

IN ADDITION, WE HAVE PARTNERED WITH MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE AND GOLDMAN SACHS TO BRING THE 10,000 SMALL BUSINESSES INITIATIVE TO MIAMI...

A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE PRACTICAL BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION, AS WELL AS IMPROVED ACCESS TO CAPITAL AND BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES.

IN SHORT, IN MY OFFICE, SMALL BUSINESSES HAVE A STRONG SUPPORTER AND A GOOD FRIEND.

REGARDLESS OF EVERYTHING WE HAVE DONE AND ALTHOUGH WE LEAD THE STATE IN JOB CREATION...

AND DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE GROWTH OF OUR METRO ECONOMY IS GREATER THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE, THERE ARE STILL TOO MANY PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY THAT HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM OUR ECONOMIC GROWTH.

FOR THIS REASON, WE LAUNCHED THE “EMPLOY MIAMI-DADE” INITIATIVE IN DECEMBER.

“EMPLOY MIAMI-DADE” PROVIDES JOB TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO THOSE RESIDENTS IN AREAS WITH HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT RATES.

ALTHOUGH MIAMI-DADE COUNTY'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IS 6 PERCENT AND IS DOWN FROM ABOUT 12 PERCENT WHEN I FIRST TOOK OFFICE, TOO MANY IN OUR COMMUNITY HAVE NOT HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE IN OUR OVERALL ECONOMIC PROSPERITY.

THAT IS WHY EMPLOY MIAMI-DADE IS SO IMPORTANT.

TO DATE, MORE THAN 850 RESIDENTS HAVE ENROLLED IN THE FIRST TRAINING CLASSES, AND MANY HAVE ALREADY SECURED EMPLOYMENT.

THEY ARE OUR NEIGHBORS, OUR FRIENDS, OUR RESIDENTS...

"EMPLOY MIAMI-DADE" USES FEDERAL, STATE AND PRIVATE SECTOR DOLLARS TO FUND ACTIVITIES AND PROVIDE STIPENDS TO PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WHILE THEY ARE IN TRAINING.

BECAUSE AS MRS. CONTRERAS-SWEET CAN ATTEST, GOVERNMENT CAN NOT CREATE ALL THE JOBS – BUT IT CAN CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT WHERE JOBS CAN GROW AND PROSPER.

AND WE HELP TO CREATE THIS ENVIRONMENT WITH PARTNERS LIKE THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION.

I HAVE ALWAYS SAID THAT THE BEST WAY OUT OF POVERTY, AND THE BEST WAY TO STRENGTHEN OUR MIDDLE CLASS, IS THROUGH GOOD JOBS.

A GOOD JOB PROMOTES SELF SUFFICIENCY AND HELPS BUILD A STRONGER COMMUNITY.

SO I ASK YOU TO JOIN ME IN THIS POVERTY REDUCTION INITIATIVE...

ON BEHALF OF THE 2.6 MILLION RESIDENTS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK ONCE AGAIN SBA ADMINISTRATOR MARIA CONTRERAS-SWEET FOR CHOOSING OUR MULTI-CULTURAL AND VIBRANT COMMUNITY FOR THE KICKOFF CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL AND MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS MIAMI-DADE COUNTY!