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Business owner lauds federal R&D program

Program helped to vastly expand Lansing company

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Jerry Hollister

WASHINGTON - Lansing business owner Jerry Hollister said Wednesday a federal research and development program that Congress may expand has helped his company nearly triple in size.

"We're looking to double again in the next year and a half," said Hollister, chief operating officer of Niowave Inc., which specializes in superconducting particle accelerators. "We're busting at the seams here."

Niowave, which started in 2006, has gotten \$5.3 million through the Small Business Innovation Research program and has additional applications pending.

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The Senate is considering extending and expanding the program, which sets aside a portion of federal research and development dollars for contracts with small businesses.

Created in 1982, the program has operated under temporary extensions in recent years. The current extension expires at the end of May. The Senate bill would extend the program through 2019 at a cost of \$150 million through 2016, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, who held a conference call with Hollister and Ann Arbor business owner Heidi Jacobus to discuss the program, said businesses need to know the program will be around for a while.

"Creating a climate of certainty and confidence is going to help us to grow even more," she said.

The bill also would increase the money that participating federal



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Michigan businesses have received more than \$584 million through the program, according to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev.

Jacobus said her company, Cybernet, was founded 20 years ago on the basis of a SBIR contract. The company now employs 60 people and has earned 30 patents.

Hollister said the contracts his company has received, primarily from the Energy Department, gave Niowave credibility that opened other doors. "We're a perfect example of how the small investment that the SBIR program has sent our way has been leveraged multiple times over," he said.

The Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, has recommended over the years that the federal government do a better job collecting data for evaluating and monitoring the program. The bill would require participating agencies to collect and report information about program participants.

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