

Robert Brian Ingram
Principal Owner & Chef
Purpose Restaurants
266 E Lafayette Frontage Rd
Saint Paul MN 55107

My Name is Brian Ingram, I own a collection of restaurants in Minnesota, many of which are located in Saint Paul. I first wanted to say thank you for this opportunity to share my experience.

My entire life has been dedicated to cooking and bringing people together over a meal. After working over 30 years in the corporate hospitality industry my wife, Sarah, and I had a vision of opening restaurants that would not only serve guests but give back to the community and create safe, diverse and inclusive work environments for our staff. We believe, as a business, if you take resources out of a community you should put your resource's right back into them. We made a commitment to donate 3% of all sales back to those in need locally who were facing housing and food insecurities.

In 2019, we formed Purpose Restaurants and opened our first concept - a breakfast bar called 'Hope'. Housed in the heart of St. Paul in a historic 140-year-old firehouse, which was built by volunteers. From the day we opened our doors we have stood with our community. Our guests have helped us to identify families in crisis through Hope and Prayer cards on each table. When the pandemic hit, we closed our restaurants to the public and transitioned into community kitchen's feeding families in need.

To date, we have given away more than 300,000 meals and over 2 million pounds of groceries and hygiene products. We even held free socially distanced drive-through proms when schools were closed to give the kids in our city a prom they would never forget.

We stood with our city when George Floyd was tragically killed. The weeks following Floyd's death our city was enraged with passion and unrest. Our city burned. We fed protestors, first responders, law enforcement and national guard members. As a man of faith, I believe God calls us to feed all of his people and to stand with those that need it most - without judgment or question.

The last few years have been some of the most trying days of our lives and not just because of Covid. As business began to reopen, crime in our city continued to escalate.

I watched first hand as bullet holes pierced my restaurant's walls and windows. I watched criminals use my parking lot as a staging ground. SUVs with no license plates, pulling unmarked trailers to loot and destroy our city.

I made phone calls to 911 and was told "we have no officers to respond".

Even after active protesting stopped, crime has continued to be a daily concern. All 7 of our restaurants and offices have been robbed numerous times, on many occasions by the same criminal. I made calls to our district attorneys, police department, and elected officials to try and find out WHY this person was let out of

jail, just days after robbing us. In frustration, and lack of law enforcement's ability to respond, we began sharing security footage from our many break-ins on social media which eventually led to their arrest. I have had to sleep on my couch with a bat out of fear for my family's safety, after exposing the criminals on social media.

I have watched as thieves with no fear walk into my restaurants and search out our employee break area and steal their purses and backpacks. These are hardworking hospitality workers that have already been financially devastated by COVID.

I have watched these criminals patrol our parking lots and eventually car jack one of our guests. I have seen criminals enter our restaurants, search through jackets hung up on coat racks to find keys. Then walk outside, hit the car alarm button to identify the car, then steal the car - knowing the entire time an employee was watching them but couldn't respond out of fear.

I have reviewed our surveillance cameras watching criminals break into our office and restaurants. These criminals have no fear that alarms were going off and strobe lights flashed. They never even hesitated to continue with the robbery. Breaking into our office, taking the time to prybar a safe bolted to the ground, roll it down 2 flights of stairs, put the safe on a dolly and roll it to their car, pop the trunk and place it hanging halfway out of the car. They walked casually to their car and drove off with absolutely no fear of being caught!

I have showed up at our restaurants, oftentimes arriving before the police because they do not have enough officers to properly patrol our neighborhoods. I have had to walk into harm's way to try and secure my business and protect our staff.

I received a phone call from a manager that was dealing with a violent person tossing over tables, spitting at and threatening employees while refusing to leave the restaurant. The police responded they didn't have any officers available. I had to get in my car and run down to the restaurant and confront this person. I had to remove the person from my restaurant and stop the threat of violence against my staff and guests. Eventually the police did arrive and I was told they could not arrest this person! They couldn't even put him in a patrol car and remove him from my restaurant! They knew this criminal by name, they knew how he worked the system. They finally convinced him to leave. I was then told by the officer *"you cannot protect your business; you have to let them do what they are going to do. You can only protect your home with force but not your business."*

Far too often, I've had to sit with an employee who was attacked leaving their shift, robbed of their daily tips. Hospitality workers have endured so much over the past few years, now they have to worry, *"Will I be assaulted at work? Will I be robbed on my way to my car? How can I find transportation that is safe because I can't stand at a bus stop or train station and feel safe?"*

I have sat with team members as they told me their difficult decision to leave the hospitality industry because they no longer feel safe working in a restaurant. In addition, late night traffic has decreased by at least 50% because customers do not want to be out late. Because of this, I have chosen to close all my restaurants by 10pm, cutting our late night revenue by 40%. We continue to open restaurants in St. Paul

but our customers are choosing suburban dining over fears of violence in the city. We have now taken businesses we intended to open in the city to the suburbs.

We recently lost one of our own.. our kitchen manager at Hope. He passed away from a different type of violence, an accidental drug overdose due to fentanyl laced. He even texted his dealer 'I think something's wrong' and the dealer texted back 'you will be fine!' That dealer is still on the streets today! Fentanyl has killed more young adults Ages 18-45 then Covid, Cancer, Car Accidents or Suicide claiming over 40,000 lives in the past year. This is a mass murder.

In response to this violence in our city, we have paid for funeral expenses of children from 7 different families who were murdered in our city in the past two years. We have used our restaurants as safe meeting places for community discussions with local government, law enforcement and citizens to discuss community safety plans.

I'm heartbroken by the mass shooting taking place around our country. I'm also heartbroken by the unrelenting violence taking place in our neighborhoods and our cities that nobody seems to want to address. People are assaulted every day on our city streets, local businesses are burglarized, staff robbed, and guests carjacked. These criminals are being released everyday to go back out and do it again. Local judges have adapted their own catch and release program. In extreme violent crimes for sentencing judges are often downward departing these cases.

Criminals have never cared about our laws or our communities. Criminals find ways to exploit our laws and use them against us. That has been proven over and over in our city.

I'm asking all of you to address the real problem: criminals fear nothing today. They know responses will most likely be slow and they know if they are caught, they will be back out on the street in most cases within hours. I'm asking you to please begin to address this problem today, not tomorrow, not form a subcommittee to discuss your hopes and dreams of policing and criminal reform but to immediately begin to enforce the rule of law.

We can and must do better with policing and criminal reform but we must not ever allow criminals to run our cities. All of our lives and the success of small business rely on it.