

PURPOSE

RESTAURANTS

Updated statement

Chairman Biggs, Ranking Member McBath, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I come to you as the owner of a small, family-owned business from Minnesota, deeply concerned about the policies that have negatively impacted not only my business and others like it but also the safety and well-being of our community.

My wife and business partner, Jeff Bornman, and I opened our first restaurant in Saint Paul, Minnesota, in September 2019, starting with just 12 employees. As we were beginning to establish ourselves, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, forcing us to shut down operations. Instead of closing our doors, we pivoted and turned our restaurant into a community kitchen and food pantry, serving over half a million free meals to families in need over the last four years. Even today, we continue providing free meals twice a week to families and homeless youth through an organization called Face to Face. While it has been a privilege to serve our community, we've also faced immense challenges due to rising crime and the failure to address repeat offenders.

Over the past few years, our restaurants and offices have been burglarized more than a dozen times. Shockingly, some of the individuals responsible have been arrested over 50 times. One individual burglarized our business three separate times—each time being released, only to return and rob us again. This is not an isolated incident. Offenders are often released with their charges reduced or dropped entirely. Even when the damage and theft far exceeded \$1,000, charges were reduced, allowing these criminals to walk free with minimal consequences.

Just last week, another one of our Saint Paul restaurants was burglarized. A few months ago, our office was broken into, and a trailer we use to transport equipment was stolen. Knowing our local police department is understaffed by more than 100 officers, we began conducting investigations ourselves. We tracked down the thief, who was attempting to sell our trailer on Facebook Marketplace. While waiting for the police to arrive at the suspect's home, one of my team members, who was parked nearby to prevent the suspect from fleeing, was nearly carjacked by four young teens. The police had to immediately respond to stop that crime.

The failure to control crime has affected more than just our business. At my 3-year-old son's daycare, a stolen car crashed into the playground where he and other children play every day. The teenagers responsible had been released after previous offenses.

These policies—soft on crime and lenient on repeat offenders—are failing us. They are failing small businesses, families, and the community at large. Something must change. We need stronger enforcement, consequences that reflect the severity of the crimes, and a justice system that prioritizes the safety of our citizens over leniency for habitual criminals.

We are heartbroken over the loss of life in our community. Our business has personally contributed to funeral expenses for young children killed in our streets. This year alone, we've stood with the families of three fallen police officers. In every instance, our company donated 100% of a day's sales—over \$30,000—to support Officer Mitchel's family. \$25,000 to the families of two fallen Burnsville police officers. We don't share this for accolades but to show how our community stood with us and these fallen officers, united in grief and support.

We have put our money and resources into more than just talk. Over the past four years, we have opened 10 restaurants and created nearly 500 jobs in our community. We stand with our community and the people of Minnesota. Now, we need our government and elected officials to stand with us and with the police officers and first responders who work every single day to make our communities safer and better places to live.

We are pleading for your action. Please consider the stories of business owners like myself and the communities we serve as you evaluate the policies in place. The safety of our businesses, our employees, our children, and our neighborhoods depend on it.

Thank you for your time and for listening to the voices of those most affected by these ongoing challenges.

Sincerely,
Brian Ingram
Owner, Purpose Restaurants
Saint Paul, Minnesota