



January 18, 2024

The Honorable Roger Williams
Chairman
Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20002

The Honorable Nydia Velázquez
Ranking Member
Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Committee Members,

Sheetz is troubled by the increase in violent crime that is being seen across the nation and we appreciate the Committee for hosting a hearing on this pressing issue.

Sheetz is a family-owned and family-operated chain of convenience stores, with more than 700 store locations across Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia and Maryland. Our company employs more than 25,000 and was founded 72 years ago in Altoona, PA.

All Sheetz store locations operate 24/7/365. We are committed to ensuring a safe experience for our employees and customers, regardless of whether they're present at 2 p.m. or 2 a.m. However, 24/7 operation also poses some unique challenges, as there are times of the day our stores will be the only business open in a community. This means the type and number of crimes that effect our stores are significantly different from many other retailers. We certainly have experienced the impact of the nation's rise in crime in a number of ways.

We are not alone. Our experiences are similar to what our entire industry is facing: an increase in shoplifting, armed robberies, vehicle theft and violent crime that either happens adjacent to, or on the lots of our store locations.

This creates a challenging environment for our employees and customers who never know if one of these incidents will escalate from something minor into a violent criminal act. Unfortunately, that was the case on Saturday, Jan. 30, 2023, when an off-duty police officer confronted three people accused of stealing beer from a Sheetz store location in North Carolina. After being confronted, one of the men accused in this crime allegedly shot and killed the officer, Sgt. Philip Dale Nix of the Greensboro Police Department. Three people have been charged as a result.

As we have been for the past 72 years, Sheetz is committed to using innovation to help maintain safety at our store locations. We are proud to have advanced camera systems that cover nearly every part of our store locations. Those cameras are complemented by a best-in-class security operations center (SOC) that is staffed 24/7/365. The SOC is linked to all of our stores through a communications system, which can be used at any

time that our store teams need assistance. These safeguards were essential in ensuring the arrest of those charged in the death of Sgt. Nix. Even more security measures are under consideration, including the use of artificial intelligence (A.I.) for crime prevention, digital locking systems for high value/high theft merchandise and deployable security towers for parking lots, as we evaluate the types of activities seen at our stores.

Sheetz has always been dedicated to being the best neighbor we can be in every community where our stores operate. That starts with strong relationships with local law enforcement and first responders – through consistent communication and giving back through free coffee for those who serve our communities. It is also carried through by our corporate donations program that assists approximately 150 nonprofit organizations every month – helping them make an even bigger difference in the neighborhoods we both call home.

However, while we've taken steps to address crime at our stores – Congress can help, too. The Combatting Organized Retail Crime Act of 2023 would increase federal enforcement of organized retail crime in which groups of professional thieves work together to steal and resell store merchandise. It would create an Organized Retail Crime Coordination Center within the Department of Homeland Security to coordinate the federal, state, and local law enforcement response to organized retail crime. We support this bill wholeheartedly and urge Congress to pass this legislation. While it would not address all criminal activity seen at convenience stores, it is a step in the right direction.

We also encourage Congress to explore potential avenues to streamline the reporting of crimes, making the process more accessible for both businesses like ours and for state and local law enforcement.

We appreciate Congress's attention to this critical issue, and we're eager to play an active and constructive role in continuing this conversation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gary Zimmerman".

Gary Zimmerman
Vice President/General Counsel
Sheetz, Inc.