

My name is Sami Mabrouk and I'm here today to testify as the owner of 89 and Pine in Columbus, Ohio. My story started in January of 2010, when I first moved to the United States as a legal immigrant. That is the same year I started laying the groundwork for my small business, which has been growing ever since. By the beginning of 2020 I owned 2 brick & mortar retail stores, and had a team of 6 people working under me, most of whom are minorities. My stores carry 3 brands that I'm proud to say are designed here in America. When COVID-19 hit, we were forced to close our stores, which resulted in the loss of all of our business. In May 2020 we were, thankfully, able to reopen for business. I was very excited to get back to business, and was ready to work even harder to make up for what was lost during the closure.

Then May 29th and 30th happened. That is when the protesting started in downtown Columbus, exactly where my stores are located. On the night of May 29th the protests turned into riots, violence and a wave of destruction that hit the city that I have been calling home for over a decade. I thought being a minority myself would protect me. I never thought that a protest in support of minority rights would flip, and do harm to a local, minority owned business. Unfortunately, that is exactly what happened to me, as well as many other small shops in the downtown Columbus area. My store was completely looted, and I lost 10 years of savings in 2 hours of looting. You heard that right, everything lost in just two hours. If that isn't enough, I was also threatened to be shot twice that same night.

I have been living the American dream; along with all the blood, sweat and tears that it requires. Then one day I woke up to a nightmare of loss and destruction. But I'm not a quitter; and I'm ready to work harder than before to get my small businesses back to where they were before that horrible night of May 29, 2020.

The last thing I will say is this; while writing this statement I also had to keep an eye on the situation in downtown Columbus again. Due to the current unrest in Louisville, KY; I was monitoring local media, social media and my store's security cameras to make sure there wouldn't be a repeat of that fateful day this past summer. It's sad that I had to do that instead of spending time with my kids after a long day of work; but I'm willing to do it because it is not just a job, it is my family's livelihood.