



small business voices. small business values.

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House Workforce and Business Development Finance and Policy

Statement of Richard Gordon

Owner, L.U.V. Microgreens

Minneapolis, MN

Main Street Alliance member

Thank you Chair Noor and members of the committee for the invitation to share my story today. My name is Richard Gordon. I started and run an in-door urban farm called L.U.V. Microgreens in Minneapolis and I am a member of Main Street Alliance. I started the farm in response to the pandemic to achieve some financial stability of my own and in response to the growing health disparities that have been continuously perpetuated to plague BIPOC communities. I grow and sell microgreens to increase access to local nutritious food and to display and spread a successful model of economic sustainability through cooperative practices in the Black community. I have had an extremely discouraging experience trying to find support for myself as a small business owner focused on community and resiliency.

I appreciate you and members of the committee for this discussion on how to best support businesses, but I am concerned that simply refilling the UI trust fund will not go a long way in supporting small businesses as a large portion of it will go towards large corporations, many of whom profited during the pandemic. Right now, I need about \$50,000 to grow my business. I have mostly only applied for business credit so far as I have been repeatedly denied for loans. I remember starting the application process for a loan and hearing about the high amount of collateral I would need - something I do not have. Nearly half of all small business owners have experienced challenges accessing credit, and this disparity is further exacerbated for women and BIPOC entrepreneurs like me.

Entrepreneurs like me who have been systematically excluded from traditional access to capital and other forms of small business relief as a new business and unable to access the tax relief from the replenishment need real investments.

Minnesota has a historical opportunity to address disparities that small business owners like me go through and provide real small business support. The success of my business will mean the success of my community. I urge members of the committee to prioritize true small business support and real investments like targeted relief and additional access to capital - and go beyond the untargeted UI tax relief. Thank you.