

Testimony for HF 4477 (Frazier)

4/3/2026

Testimony of: Jesus Ramirez local Latino artist

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Jesus Ramirez, and I am a Latino entrepreneur and artist living and working here in Minnesota. I started my business as a freelance artist while working with community organizers via youth programming. By combining my love of the arts, community engagement, youth programming, and my ability to work with youth, I have been able to develop consulting opportunities with nonprofits and community organizations. I have been expanding my reach through social media and have been blessed with a steady request for individual commissioned work. Recently this has grown into consignment opportunities, having my paintings sold in other local businesses and learning from their experiences. I love the idea of having my art in the homes of my neighbors while contributing to local commerce. At the core of all this is the same belief many small business owners share: that hard work, consistency, and service to the community would be enough to build something stable for myself, for my family, and for the neighborhood around me.

But over the past year, that belief has been shaken.

I want to speak today about how the increased ICE activity has interrupted the Latino business community, especially the small, informal, and under-the-radar businesses that rarely show up in reports or statistics but are essential to the local economy.

Many Latino owned businesses operate quietly. Some are family run, cash based or shared among relatives. Some don't have lawyers on retainers, publicists, or accountants. They exist because mainstream systems have often been inaccessible, slow, or intimidating. These businesses are barber shops, food vendors, cleaning services, repair shops, market stalls, and home-based operations. They keep money circulating locally. They employ neighbors. They serve communities that larger businesses overlook.

When ICE agents show up in our neighborhoods sometimes visibly, sometimes quietly the impact is immediate and devastating.

Customers stop coming. Workers stay home. Deliveries are delayed. Phones stop ringing. Entire business corridors go silent, not because of crime or lack of demand, but because of fear.

I have seen business owners open their doors knowing they will not make rent that month, but opening anyway out of pride and responsibility. I have seen people lose weeks of income overnight not because they did anything wrong, but because the environment made it unsafe to exist publicly.

For young entrepreneurs like myself, this creates a constant state of instability. Planning becomes impossible. Growth is put on hold. Hiring is risky. Even simple things posting business hours, advertising online, or attending networking events start to feel like liabilities instead of opportunities.

This disruption does not only affect undocumented individuals. It affects legal residents, U.S. citizens, and mixed-status families. It affects landlords, suppliers, and surrounding businesses. When Latino businesses slow down, entire neighborhoods feel it.

What is especially painful is that many of these business owners are deeply rooted here. They pay taxes. They sponsor youth teams. They donate food. They mentor young people like me. They are not hiding from responsibility; they are carrying it, often without recognition or protection.

As a young Latino entrepreneur, I want to build my future in Minnesota. I want to hire locally. I want to grow above the radar, not stay beneath it out of fear. But that requires an environment where economic participation does not come with the risk of surveillance or disruption.

I am not here to argue policy details. I am here to speak to impact.

When enforcement actions are carried out without regard for economic and community harm, they undermine the very stability that small businesses create. They discourage entrepreneurship. They push commerce further into the shadows. And they weaken trust between communities and the institutions meant to serve them.

I ask that you consider the voices of small business owners who cannot be here today because showing up feels too risky. I ask that you recognize that public safety and economic vitality are not opposites but they cannot exist where fear replaces trust.

Latino businesses are not a side economy. They are a cornerstone of Minnesota's present and future.

Thank you for listening, and for taking this testimony into consideration.

Sincerely,

Jesus Ramirez

(jesusramirez.mn@gmail.com)

651.404.8993

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Carlos Aguilar from Charito Bajar, and I am writing in strong support of HF4477 as the owner of Charito Bakery.

During the recent disruptions, we lost around 70-80% of our sales. For a long period of time, we had little to no in-store business. The only income we were able to generate came from making deliveries to support our community. However, this was not enough to cover our bills or rent.

These deliveries did not bring profit I did them because I could, and because I saw how afraid people in our community were to leave their homes. It was important to me to continue showing up for them during such a difficult time.

Before everything happened, we had 7 employees. Due to fear and uncertainty, many of them had to leave. As of today, April 7, I am still struggling to catch up on overdue payments. I have not given up. I continue asking for support from my family and taking on more debt because this is not just a business it is my family's livelihood.

This support would help me pay overdue bills and begin to recover from the many expenses and debts we have accumulated. More importantly, it would allow me to continue serving my community. People trust our business, and while customers are slowly starting to return, the damage has already been done.

If you support HF4477, I will continue doing my part to serve and uplift our community. We support each other, and that is how we move forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Charito Bakery

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Diana Cordova, and I am the owner of Danna's Boutique LLC. I am writing in strong support of HF4477.

As a new mother, this experience has been especially difficult. In early December, while I was still pregnant, everything began to happen. Even though we had no sales, I continued coming into the store. I would look outside and see everything going on, which made it clear that we had to close for safety reasons.

We briefly reopened during the week of Christmas, and thankfully had a few customers come in to buy gifts. But shortly after, we had to close again for two more months.

During that time, I seriously considered closing the business. I felt like I had to choose between keeping my store open or being able to provide food for my family. Some customers would call and ask me to bring items to their homes, but I was also afraid.

In March, we made the difficult decision to reopen. We discounted everything by 50% just to be able to pay rent. This is a family business my husband and I both work in the store. We used all of our savings because we could not fall behind on payments, especially with the risk of increased costs and taxes.

Right now, we are not making any profit. We are selling items at the same price we paid for them. Since January, we have not paid ourselves as employees because we chose to prioritize keeping the business alive.

Support from HF4477 would help us stabilize, increase our inventory, and begin to rebuild our sales. Before all of this, we had customers coming from other states. Now, the street feels empty it is not the same.

I am asking for your help. This business is our life, and we are only asking for another opportunity to continue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Diana Cordova
Danna's Boutique LLC

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Diana Vanessa Geniz Rubio, and I am writing in support of HF4477 on behalf of Panadería San Miguel, a family-owned bakery located on Lake Street that has served our community for over 20 years.

For more than two decades, the bakery has been a consistent and trusted space for families . In all those years, we have never had to close our doors, not even during difficult times such as the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd.

However, we were recently forced to close for 25 days. This was an incredibly difficult decision, but necessary, as individuals were being detained directly in front of our business, raising serious concerns for the safety of our customers and employees.

For a business that has never closed in over 20 years, this shutdown created a significant financial burden. We lost critical income and experienced damages that we are still working to recover from.

Support for HF4477 would be essential for us. These resources would help us, above all, continue paying our employees who have been a vital part of our journey and repair the damages our business has faced.

We respectfully urge you to support HF4477 so that small businesses like ours can continue serving our communities and recover from these hardships.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Diana Vanessa Geniz Rubio
Panadería San Miguel

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Oscar Rodriguez and I am the owner of El Ranchito. First, I want to sincerely thank you for your time.

Opening this restaurant has always been my dream. With a lot of fear and uncertainty, I opened in January during a very difficult time. We officially launched in June, but due to ongoing challenges, we were forced to close in January and have only recently reopened.

Since then, we have lost most of our employees, and our business has struggled deeply. We have had very little profit almost none. It has been incredibly difficult, but I have not lost faith.

Many of my most consistent “customers” are those who don’t have a home, I often provide them with meals in exchange for small help, like taking out the trash or washing dishes. Sometimes, I simply give them food with nothing in return because I see the need in our community.

Even now, people are still not going out like before. We are behind on rent and owe bills like electricity. It has been very hard. We have prioritized paying our employees whenever possible. At times, when we had extra food, we chose to donate it to those in need.

With support from HF4477, we would be able to pay off our debts and secure jobs for our employees. Right now, I am essentially starting from zero. We no longer have savings, which is why this support would make a critical difference.

Thank you for everything you are doing to support small businesses like ours.

Sincerely,

Oscar Rodriguez

El Ranchito

1821 East Lake Street Minneapolis Mn 55407

Hello Chair and Committee Administrator,

My name is Stephanie March, and I am submitting testimony for **HF4477** for the House Workforce, Labor and Economic Development Committee hearing on April 8, 2026.

This testimony is in **strong support of HF4477**.

Name: Stephanie March

Position: co-founder of The Salt Cure Fund

Email: stephaniemarchmn@gmail.com

Thank you for your consideration.

Good morning Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Stephanie March, and I am the co-founder of The Salt Cure Fund and long-time member of the local food media from Minneapolis.

I am here today in strong support of HF4477.

Community-based organizations and small businesses are essential infrastructure in Minnesota. They are the very threads that knit our communities together. Right now, many are experiencing significant instability due to ongoing disruptions, increased demand for services, and reduced resources.

This bill provides a critical pathway to stabilize communities by investing in trusted organizations that are already doing the work on the ground. These are the businesses that always show up for Minnesotans, and we can't afford to lose their connective tissue.

Restaurants, specifically, have been impacted through the actions of this past winter, losing traffic in an already critical time of year while doing the extra work to protect their teams and families. Despite the very real risks to their business, these restaurants stepped forward in their communities, acting as donation centers, opening as community gathering spaces, and feeding their neighbors however they could. To varying degrees, they do this all year long, even in good times. But the losses they've incurred due to outside forces, the unexpected damage done to their budgets and savings, has created a situation from which they may not recover without vital funds. My organization has raised \$1.3 million dollars, but it's a drop in the bucket compared to what's necessary to stabilize our local food scene.

Without timely support, we risk losing a food community that brings people to our state and earns us national acclaim, but more importantly provides livelihoods for families, social touchpoints for neighborhoods, and opportunities for generational wealth for immigrants and all citizens.

I urge you to support HF4477 and ensure that our communities have the resources they need to recover and thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.