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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

COVID-19 impact, food services, licensing issues, minority business, discrimination, childcare sector, legal battles, reimbursement delays, USDA funding, community support, political advocacy, business sustainability, regulatory compliance, nonprofit partnerships, state agencies.

SPEAKERS

Keith Ellison, Cross-talk, Imam Mohamed, Salim Said, Ikram Mohamed, Speaker 1, Mrs. Ghandi (?), Mahad Omar, Abshir Omar

Salim Said 00:00

No, I'm from Somali. Yeah, I own restaurants and commercial properties. I'm a restaurant guy, and also I own warehouses, distribution, most likely a food services most of the time.

Ikram Mohamed 00:20

So we call him with all the issues with licensing and restaurant try to get

Salim Said 00:24

Warehouses, restaurants, most of restaurants, you know, like a lot of restaurants,

Abshir Omar 00:31

they have food services industry,

Salim Said 00:35

like, if you need, like, machines, like, yes, like,

Ikram Mohamed 00:41

yeah. We called soleman, because in the beginning of the COVID, they were the they were the actual restaurant that stepped up to serve as our elderly. It started with the elderly and then went down to children and families that weren't able to feed their children. Yeah. So then we said, hey, reach out to other restaurants. And they took that upon themselves, yeah, and he's a huge contributor to Mayor Frey. So we figured, okay, this is a good guy. So

Keith Ellison 01:22

I hope he remembers.

Abshir Omar 01:24

Yeah, he remembers, but we also remind them. So naal and Blackie, they are business leaders amongst business leaders, right organizing hundreds of other small businesses in their industries and sectors, and they're here today as representatives of their cohort.

Keith Ellison 01:45

What's your last name? Mohammed,

Ikram Mohamed 01:48

M, O, H, A, M, E, D, there's so many spellings to Mohammed. Very

Keith Ellison 01:53

<cross-talk> a, b, S, H, I,

Imam Mohamed 02:01

are. There's a difference between just like businesses want to come together and people who know how to organize. Like, literally the first time when we say Isaiah and Muslim coalition all this, people didn't know how to be a member as a business organizational Association, like they asked me, Why do I need to be and now today, they're like, at a point you just send the link, they sign up, right? Because, again, it's like a union.

Speaker 1 02:33

<cross-talk>

Keith Ellison 02:33

<cross-talk> Tell me your last name, O, M, A, R, MMBA was the last name? Abshir Omar.

Ikram Mohamed 02:46

So MMBA is the actual Association, Minnesota minority, Mu from Gambia. So the thing is, we Gambia. So the thing is very well rounded. Knows a lot of ins and outs of these compliances, and also the system, how it works an old, you know, school, and he understands how politics works. This man was the actual campaign manager for Bernie Sanders. So let's not sugar coat that he knows how to work the angles.

Abshir Omar 03:28

So the Minnesota Minority Business Association is a collaborative over 600 businesses from various industries in the karakia and the one thing that they all have in common outside of their ethnic origins is the battles they've been facing with NDE, DHS, NDH and various other state agencies that manage the care economy here in Minnesota colonies, not .<cross-talk> And their commonality is that every time East African business owners enter a market segment, these various departments and counties come in in arbitrary fashions, create unnecessary roadblocks and hurdles, and at times, conduct business in a very racist, xenophobic, Islamophobic manner, and our community has spent millions of dollars hiring lawyers to sue to protect our businesses. And these tasks keep coming. In the last few years, business

owners from the child care sector came together, and they started organizing, and it started becoming a little bit more proactive in fighting for their businesses and their communities, and we've also seen that in other various groups within the care economy. But what mm BA is doing is bringing together these various sectors of the care economy to work together in collaboration. Right to organize money to organize people in order to achieve our legislative aims. Right? We're not asking for anything special. We're asking to be treated just like any other business in the state, and to be respected in that sense. But sadly, we have to organize and spend money to do that, but that's the cost of business of living here in America, and we understand that, but what we are seeing today is our business leaders are moving from our parents generation to my generation, and we operate a lot differently. We don't have the same fear that our parents did. We understand how the laws work in this country, but more importantly, how power is actually achieved, and it is used for your aims. And we are interested in protecting our resources that we are currently having right our business owners, the properties that we own, the lines and businesses that we operate in. We're interested in protecting what we have currently and also in spanning our scope. And we are organizing in very different way. So mm, VA, we have a c4 now, and we are not going to be as quiet and amenable as our parents generation. We are going to be loud and aggressive, and we are going to be organizing for our interests. We don't care about the persons who their religion, their background, who they are friends with. We are interested in, are you aligned with our vision and our values, and we are willing to put our money where our mouths are, in that sense, helping elected officials that are interested in protecting communities of color specifically and creating a business atmosphere that's fair and equal, not one where We are targeted arbitrarily and preciously by different departments because of the origin of our nation and our religion and our power in that sense. But I'm preaching to the choir you serving in Congress. I remember when I lived in Seattle, when that debate was happening about you swearing in on the Quran, your basic faith being attacked, conspired with you, and you shut them the hell out. Just fire together. And your time in Congress one of the most difficult periods politically for Muslims in this country, and you having to fight that battle alone, and then now in the Attorney General seat, and that difficult battle you have to take to get there, and as you're well aware of, this community has been behind you, and we continue to stand behind you, but we are dealing with some very difficult market forces acting against us, and it is costing us 10s of millions of dollars a year in legal defenses, in Businesses closing, and the psyche of our community being fractured, and it's wrong, and it's absolutely wrong, it's illegal, it's immoral, and it is not what should be happening here. But alhamdulillah, we've come together. We put our resources behind each other, and we are moving in a coordinated fashion to protect our interests. Well,

Keith Ellison 07:59

let me tell you this. I'm very concerned about it. I don't run the agencies, but let me just finish by saying but often the agencies call on my lawyers to represent them, and so it's good that we're talking because we've been in a series of conversations with Jody harpstead As late as a week ago on how you cannot crunch down on these because here's the thing, is, as big as you are, collectively, most are pretty small, and you're making you're running small, tiny businesses out of business overnight. And a lot of times, if you think there's a problem, I mean, people look everybody has to combine with what the rules are, but if somebody submits something that's not in the right format, then you call them and say, This is not in the right format, not you're out, you're done, your contracts are over. And so this has my attention. I'm extremely frustrated by it, but we are in the middle of a battle with the agencies now, and I can tell you this walls agrees with me that this piddly, stupid stuff, running small people out of business

is terrible, but it's the problem of, like, it's The problem of, you know, it's the classic problem if he's here and this guy here is giving these businesses a hard time, this guy these folks somehow say, hey, they're picking on me. And he's like, oh us, No, we're not and so it's this back and forth. So now what we got to do is make it clear that this guy has got to stop it, right? But it's the problem, but you but he knows that there's a lot of unfair, discriminatory stuff going on East African businesses. I know it these department here. Is like, you know Julie Herbst now know that we know it, and she says we're gonna stop doing it. But I don't believe it until you tell me they've stopped doing it, because the we're talking about when the rubber hits the road right, or the car, you know what's gonna happen. Then you say you're not doing it. But if some some sisters who just opened their childcare business, is getting the run around. Then for her, it's real. So we've got to stay specific. There will be cases that, you know, I want you to feel free to call me directly. You know, feel free to call me directly. And it is my goal to see prosperity among people who've been denied it. You know, I think it's very kind and important for you to say that new American communities appreciate the sacrifices of people who come before, but we're all in this together, right? You see, I'm saying, I think it's kind of you to say it, and I appreciate it, but we, we don't recognize no differences between us. We're we're one, and we're going to stand up for each other and make sure that we get some things fixed. Absolutely, I do recognize there's a problem. But what I what I really need to move to be effective on your behalf, is to get specific. And it's like, you know, this sister on this day is having this problem on this and then I can call up and like, what is the problem? And let me tell you, just being able to say, just getting the question, just getting the inquiry from AG, is sometimes enough to make people knock it off. It's like, oh, because they're doing this undercover of darkness. You know, actually,

Abshir Omar 11:47

I appreciate that. And in regards to what you're talking about, it's a very serious dynamic that's at play. And I come and Nasra can speak to this. Specifically, there was an incident not too long ago, a child care center, a Somali owned child care center, was severely treated for misplacing and mis categorizing paperwork, minor infractions human error, and they were shut down, I believe. And during the same time frame, a kinder child care center, kinder care, kinder care, taking care of the child with Down Syndrome and a feeding tube, was allowed to wander outside the facility and into a local pond and was retrieved by a neighbor in that community, and all they received was \$1,000 supplement the disparities between treatment is real, and it is costing livelihoods and destroying the community in that sense. But we want to get really specific here. And I work in the political field, and I understand very well how all this operates, and if I want to be frank, and I think everyone in this room wants to be frank, and this is a safe space. We're a collective in that sense, there is a fight. There's a battle in the state, as well as in this country, for communities that look like us, having to fight, to protect and keep what we have, and the only way we can protect what we have is by inserting ourselves into the political arena, putting our votes where it needs to be, but most importantly, putting our dollars in the right place, and supporting candidates that will fight to protect our interests. That's right. You can only protect our interests when we have your back, and you don't have to worry about who's behind you, right? And we have to be frank and honest. You are dealing with market forces and political situations, and you have to operate in the best manner that you can operate in the state, with your donors, with your power base. But if you are secure in your donor base, and if you are secure in your power base, you can act the way you want to act.

Keith Ellison 13:54

Money is freedom.

Abshir Omar 13:58

And our community, our business owners, we are not the same community. 25 years ago, the amount of money circulating in our community today is powerful, and we haven't really harnessed it in a very meaningful way to support people at the highest level and ensure that they are comfortable and safe, knowing that they can advocate for our communities without regard to your next fundraiser, acting in the best interest of the community. And for example, right now, one of the biggest issues facing in our community is the CACFP program and how the Department of Education. Wait a minute, what is that? Child and Adult Care Food Program? See CACFP Alpha. Acronyms, children, Child and Adult Care, food program. It is a program from the USDA. It's available in all 50 states and territories, and it's managed by generally, the Department of Education. In each state. It's federal dollars funneled into the state to feed children and adults with developmental disabilities.

Ikram Mohamed 15:09

Oh, run by department. So it's the at risk, run by USA, yeah, USDA. USDA,

Abshir Omar 15:13

yeah. And this program has been around since the 1960s it's a sister program of free and reduced, free and reduced insurance. Children have access to food while they're at school.

Ikram Mohamed 15:24

It was actually started by an African American, yes, and

Abshir Omar 15:29

CACFP was started, and it's been around since. So who's

Keith Ellison 15:38

who's given so is it fairly funded,

Ikram Mohamed 15:42

locally administered by the state, by m d

Abshir Omar 15:47

and the Department of Education has been managing this program for several decades. And due to the COVID pandemic, the US, US federal government instituted changes to the management of the program, which allowed for expanded access to communities in our state, and there has been tremendous growth right our community members and business owners have stepped up to ensure that we're feeding 1000s of children every single week, making sure they have access to Healthy, high quality, nutritious meals, culturally appropriate, culturally specific, for the Asian communities, for the Latino communities, for the Muslim communities, African American community and the Caucasian community and indigenous communities. It is a massive program that has brought hundreds of millions of dollars to the state of Minnesota, created 1000s of jobs, strengthened the capacities of hundreds of

nonprofits, but MBE saw a bunch of East African business owners taking part, and just like we've seen with MVH, DHS and various other programs, they came down hard, and we have been fighting for our lives, and we have been kicking their butt. But we cannot be in this position where we are on defensive mode all day long. It's bad for business. You cannot grow. You can't create new jobs. It is bad for our community. It's discriminatory.

Keith Ellison 17:12

What are they doing? Are they denying they

Abshir Omar 17:14

stopped the program carte blanche. They said there's too many people being fed carte blanches kind of going to jump in.

Ikram Mohamed 17:21

And so what happened was, when the COVID hit, people like or business owners like Afro deli, Kahin Safari restaurant, which is these guys, took initiative. Yeah. Took initiative. Yeah, by the restaurant. Yeah, took the initiative to provide meals to our elderly. That's how it started, and then to families who said, Well, it's not only them. We can't get out of our house, moms or single moms.

Keith Ellison 17:55

So help me understand how the money flows. So the money flows from the federal, state in the E, and then M D, and then the M D picks

Ikram Mohamed 18:05

vendors out. So the way it works is that United States Department of Agriculture has the puddle right, and then they give it to M d e, to administer states right, to be able to, you know, make sure the guidelines and protocols, yes, yes, yes. Red tapes are done. Then MBE has contracts and agreements with sponsors. Those sponsors have other contracts with sites, sites meaning partners in quality care or feeding our future. They are a nonprofit. They're all nonprofit. So then they actually host a contract with MD. Then MD says you're a multi, multi site sponsor. I'm a sponsor, by the way,

Keith Ellison 18:54

but in so the state 72 nonprofit who's a sponsor? Yes. Charter School

Ikram Mohamed 18:59

that sponsor. Public Schools are a sponsor, yes, not only nonprofit, but childcare. So I'm a self sponsor. Example B, I go directly with M D E, then M D, E only reimburses me for the children that I bill because I'm a self sponsor. But that's right, I

Keith Ellison 19:17

fed a bunch of kids,

Ikram Mohamed 19:17

then I get reimbursed for it. There you go. But a childcare like Nusra cheaper, but who has a contract with a sponsor like quality care or feeding our future, she then sends her bill to them. They send it to MBE. So they're basically like the middlemen. So

Keith Ellison 19:40

in a way, if you don't get, if, in the E cuts, you you could spend a bunch of money feeding kids, and they won't honor your bill. There are, they have done the money

Ikram Mohamed 19:52

first, then you get back. Yeah, it's a reimbursement

Keith Ellison 19:55

so you can get, you could get messed up. Does it have. There

Ikram Mohamed 20:00

it has. It has. It has happened. So the pushback that we have phased 200,000

Abshir Omar 20:04

groups that are owed \$2 million yes, and MTE has refused to honor the contracts as stipulated by federal law, based

Keith Ellison 20:13

on them claiming non compliance, no,

Ikram Mohamed 20:16

based on what they have claimed so far, is the fact that they, they, the program grew too fast. The COVID hit. Everybody went into

Keith Ellison 20:27

they're saying, we're giving you your money. We just can't get it to you fast enough. Is that what they're saying? So they, they, yep, that, okay. So, so that one can so that's a super unfortunate but it might not be malicious. Nope. It becomes

Ikram Mohamed 20:41

malicious. Okay, so then that's how it started.

Imam Mohamed 20:44

But they started their story. They narrate in the story how it started. Yes, oh, you're giving what is the app right now? So what

Ikram Mohamed 20:50

happened is, MD had a lot of applications by two major sponsors. Those two sponsors, they share one common ground. They share the East African Community. They share the fact that a lot of the Somalis have stepped up and said, Wait a minute, I'm a restaurant. Safari stepped up and Safari is all over.

Congresswoman Ilhan Omar is volunteering over there. I want to be like that. I'm a restaurant, and I got shut down. Who do I get a contract with? Look for a sponsor. So then those two sponsors, one thing they have common ground on is the fact that they have served the Somali community. So they both felt like they had to because of the COVID, because of the riots, to be honest with you, I don't know if you remember, but George Floyd, it became a huge ordeal when the restaurants, when the mama Papa stores, shut down Cub Foods target from Mississippi River by Lake all the way to Uptown, there's no way that those people will be able to go get food from people were getting on busses. There was no transportation. So then these two sponsors said, Hey, let's feed the Let's feed the people in the community and get reimbursed, right? Because this is actual in like, entitled funding. It's not state funding, it's USDA entitled funding. MBE only has to administer it. So then those two sponsors, when they when they did that, and they saw the community step up to the plate and service. There was lines at Safari looping around Lake Street, and it was on Facebook, and a lot of community members said, I want to do it too. They stepped in. They did the same thing, whether it was mosques, nonprofits or restaurants, M, D, E, put a pause to it. They put a stop pay. Then they denied 142 applications on one sponsor and 208 on the other sponsor.

Keith Ellison 22:54

So say those numbers again, 208 sites

Ikram Mohamed 22:57

on one sponsor and 142 sites on the other stopped, halted, just with the payments. They put over \$6 million on hold.

Imam Mohamed 23:08

So they put into our context this system, because I've been part of a faith, faith coalitions, many churches used to do for the last 34 oh yeah, oh yeah, they've been doing Meals on

Keith Ellison 23:20

Wheels, of course. So it's USDA, you know, the guy who runs wheels, are wheels, yes. V, Dave, Dave Colin,

Imam Mohamed 23:28

Veep, you know, V that's like they are in a big, large, you know, Second Harvest, all this big, gigantic, per se, some of them are nonprofit, and some of our for profit are running this. You can see it has been. I mean, one of the stories I have seen on the white lady who worked in this industry for those big non profits, she said this program has been between in rural area and mostly white people for the last forever years, nobody complained. 90% used to go to white kids. And now when North Minneapolis and brother Jimmy, brother, Jimmy Jamil Jackson, Jackson nuestro, they opened their own like sites, and now understood how to feed the community. The community is not like, vegan. What you give them for the whole day was as a pork or not, and they're culturally appropriate nutrition and everything. And then now it's got the attention of MBE. This is like, literally, it should be something that they should come out and say, celebrate with the community. They should, they should, but they state that 95% white and 5% black. Now this is just coming down on this two 1% or whatever that is, and the minority of minority trying to serve because I or mosque was part of it. City, Bloomington came forward and they named. Is

2021, the pioneer and change. Make sure the community, sure the Imam, notable Imam, like in the neighbor, a good neighbor, something like that. Because of this, we've been serving with the city, school, school district, room, the school district, and also the month, Musk is giving this every Friday, every weekend, this meals and the people are appreciated. But yet, you see this is like a huge takeoff. I mean, this is one of the examples of the things that this business are going through. And

Ikram Mohamed 25:30

sad thing is, I'm sorry to interrupt, but even with Taro, far up being so huge, they're still being targeted. I mean, the City of Minneapolis Health Department has been giving you guys a lot of just questions, Q and A's constant, no Bloomington. Bloomington health department, because one of your staff members had reached out to me and said, Hey, I need your help. And I asked him, what's going on. And he said, Hey, I got a checklist that I'm supposed to go abide by. I said, Okay, which sponsor you with? And he he shared it with me, and then I asked him a couple more questions, and it just sounded ridiculous. What that woman said to me was they have instructions from MDE to go to every site at that sponsor, the sponsor and MDE are having some dispute. So sponsor, the sponsor actually took the initiative to suit Good for her. I love it, but I do feel like there's a backlash that we are like not able to comprehend. MDE had contracted with all or sent out a memo to all the departments of health in the cities, whether it's Brooklyn Park, City of Minneapolis, St Paul Bloomington, for instance, and they're told to look at four or five different things. My question is, what does Department of Health have to do with if the children are enrolled at a certain site? Things like that to me, make no sense. No, they have no basis. The

Imam Mohamed 27:05

fire department in Bloomington were given food in our parking lot, in our party. They didn't get

Ikram Mohamed 27:11

Q and A's. They didn't get questions or push back and give him food.

Imam Mohamed 27:15

And this is the same contract, and that photo was given food. People, they're not going to the fire department,

Ikram Mohamed 27:21

but they're coming to you guys, yeah, because you're providing culturally appropriate foods, those are the different Yeah, conceptualize

Abshir Omar 27:26

it a little bit. The way the program works is the USDA provides funding to each state's Department of Education to manage this program. The Department of Education contracts with sponsors to manage the program for them. And these sponsors go up to nonprofits, churches, mosques, synagogues, school districts, community centers, and they provide them a subcontract to actually provide the services to the communities they serve. These nonprofits buy food wholesale from vendors, distributors. Go to Costco foods, Costco or the local Halal Mart in their products, they pay out of pocket right to buy the food they serve the children after the service has been provided, they bill the sponsor.

The sponsor bills the state. The State bills the federal government and Washington will send the money down to the state, and it goes back in order, this program has been in lifeline for hundreds of 1000s of children in our state, right? One sponsor, for example, feeding our future, feeds 150,000 200,000 I've heard the name, right, and nd E has fought in very disgusting ways, and I mean, beyond any level of decency. Do you have a name? Monica Herrera, Director of Food and Nutrition Services, nde has acted so recklessly that a district court judge in Minnesota found them in contempt, really arbitrary and capricious behavior. And stated, in his opinion, he did not have any faith that they would follow this court order, which they did not. And Monica Herrera, in her public statement, said she disagreed with the judge in the court and that she would do it all over again. This is a form of violence against our community under the color of law, and it shouldn't stand well, and

Ikram Mohamed 29:28

they had to pay a fee. Yeah, remember they were they had to pay a recitation and be had to pay tax dollars.

Imam Mohamed 29:34

That's the case. One another case I want also to add for us to kind of the DHS and how they are, like taking on the childcares and also the, what's called the licensing program for the childcares.

Keith Ellison 29:50

What does she say, in her own defense? Does she say it's not my fault? Is this? Is that? What is her position? How does she justify her act?

Abshir Omar 29:59

Her statement was she did not agree with the court's decision, and the judge in a statement, we'll get the statement to you via email looking

Keith Ellison 30:10

for the statement now, basically

Abshir Omar 30:12

he had no faith. He had no faith that the Department of Education would follow the court directive, which they did not, and other injunctions are filed against them, but basically, we have a reckless department on the loose that's not following state law, and you are in the difficult position under statutory law to defend that department. Well, your office is spending a lot of money defending criminal like behavior, and well are required to well. But here's

Keith Ellison 30:38

the thing, this is the first time really hearing about it. Okay? You know, I got 400 people at the AGs office. They get calls. We have a case which represent us. They don't run them all past me. They just know they're supposed to do this. But when you tell me, Hey, this is a problem, I call somebody and say, what's going on? And if we don't want to do what the agency is saying. Please do I call the agency head or the governor say we cannot do this? I mean, just we do this fairly regularly, and by usually it's environmental stuff, when you know, we have to say we're not going to defend that, you know, and

there's other things, and then they got to negotiate, or we tell them, you're going to get sued, sued, sued. You cannot violate the law this way. And so this is a very good conversation to have, and quite honestly, I wouldn't even know about it unless you told me, because I only hear about problems, right? But Monica Herrera, so while we were talking, I sent a note to my staff named Luz Frias, who I think supervises the lawyers who represent MD, and I asked her, What is going on here, Luz, can you tell me who represents MD? What's going on with the child and adult food program? Hearing a lot of complaints, so I should hear some pretty soon,

Mahad Omar 32:01

something interesting that I wanted to add to I remember that we got called in MDE once they decided to stop a payment. You have all these vendors who bought food who have been distributing it for 30 days, and all of a sudden they're being told we don't know we don't know what's going to happen. Program is suspended indefinite. One we brought about 303 50 of them into one place, and we said, make no mistake that this is not against the particular sponsor. The only reason why they're so angry and they're doing this, this. A, they think they could get away with it. B and N, de does not understand the power you all have. After that meeting, you know, they start receiving phone calls. People start calling them, and then I call these people organize themselves. Within weeks, they said, Okay, you know, we don't have a problem. We've released the payment. But okay, if you have a problem, and this, we've seen this with DHS. If the department has a problem with particular individuals or they don't like how the program is being run, you don't come and shut down the entire, you know, the entire program

Keith Ellison 33:12

when people have expended money, right? So what I'm getting is people will say, spend money to feed people and then expect to be reimbursed, yes and then not. And that's what's

Imam Mohamed 33:27

happening. But they trying to do everything in their power to send and use the system against these people so they can get criminal like they can get crimes that they can use and label everybody.

Abshir Omar 33:41

And for example, what was talking about right now, the legal fight against M, D, E, to stop them from acting this way has been very successful, right? But they are continually changing tactics, and their new tactic is death by attrition, right? They're trying to snuff people out, going out of their way to work with local, city departments, health departments, fire inspection teams, instituting new rules basis in state or federal

Imam Mohamed 34:11

just in our case, asking the fire department to investigate this building whether their support of the building allows

Keith Ellison 34:20

this kind of what you're talking about, Minnesota allowed feeding our future applications to languish during pandemic.

Abshir Omar 34:26

That's one of the groups that has been that's just an example of how MBE has been targeting the East African Community, who are certainly

Ikram Mohamed 34:36

one particular sponsor. This is the entire program, yeah, this is the entire program. Yeah.

Keith Ellison 34:43

This is back November 2020,

Mahad Omar 34:46

over a year ago. Yeah. Speaking of that, we had, we had about 100 plus childcare centers that mainly come under two different sponsors, and I remember them saying that, hey, listen, I've already fed the skids and I cannot get reimbursement. And some. These traffic centers have 40 kids. Some have 100 kids. Some of them, some of them are delivering the food. And these are, you know, programs that have been running for the past 20 years. Have you know this? Kids have been with them, and all of a sudden, you know, because of COVID, 40 kids have to stay home. Maybe 20 are at the center, and they're like, Wait, how am I supposed to afford? Most of my employees are gone. I'm not getting the proper bill, and now they're asking me to pay for the food. And when we asked, you know, MBE, what is your explanation? Like? You know, these people are have fed the kids. This person has 40, that person has 100 this person, what is your then, no explanation. We should just shut down the entire program. No explanation. So this is, I hear you. So this Do

Keith Ellison 35:39

y'all know? Mcphera Hussein. She's

Ikram Mohamed 35:43

a nonprofit with Orem feeds and shamsia hopes

Keith Ellison 35:48

she's got an article on the mcphera Hussein's meal program have been feeding 5000 children a day in the Twin Cities. A state effort to discipline an intermediary nonprofit forester to suspend operations. This is the heart of the problem, right? And this article is may 2021,

Ikram Mohamed 36:08

this has been going up for some time. What the What the

Keith Ellison 36:12

heck, man, nobody's who's mine in the store. I don't tolerate problems. To go on this. I mean, you

Ikram Mohamed 36:18

guys defend Ed, unfortunately, you're by by default, yeah, but

Keith Ellison 36:27

nobody know what they do. We get we get cases in, and they said, we're being it's like this, we're being sued. Okay, well, what do we do? They do the same thing, and then they run back to you. Well, they do the same thing every time they get sued. So whenever, whenever the state gets sued, it's always the attorney general. It's always that's by Minnesota statute 8.06 that's what the that's part of what the Ag does. Now that doesn't mean that if we're defending the wrong thing, that we just keep on doing it. You all bringing this to I'm telling you this is not come to my attention until now. Really. I mean, I've heard this little problem, that little problem, but never this way. You know,

Imam Mohamed 37:15

the thing about the kid, I mean, let me just put this way. What we want here today is establish this relationship, not only one program over another. It's like,

Ikram Mohamed 37:26

this is a lot like right now. It's only been one program that we talked about, not the other. I just, I just want to say it this, brother. I mean, have you ever heard this program called medical transportations? Yeah, there are families who went into like home. Their homes got went for closure because their program and businesses have been shut down by just one letter.

Mahad Omar 37:53

One letter. Everyone received the same letter. The only thing they changed is the address and the time frame, are they saying

Keith Ellison 38:01

that you didn't really give the rides? What is the claim? So

Mahad Omar 38:06

previously, the claim this was like, way, way back. So that has been the fight. You know, the state has been going on for a long time. Those particular businesses, most of them, went out of business today, actually about about two weeks ago. Some of them came to our office and they're like, Hey, we're about 20 plus, and now we can't even afford the rights that we're giving. It's not sustainable. Is there any way we can raise the rates? So those business, the medical, medical transportation, the state platform, they haven't found anything. They just put they just, they passed a law to, you know, eventually suspend them. And then if you're a business, and your business has been suspended for a long time, you're not getting Bill, you just go out of business. So most of them just went out of business. So brother, this is the concept building. This is the concept the state has. They have contracts, they give they have. They are work that people do for the state, starting from the largest insurances who are building the state or federal government insurance owned by white people, nobody questions there's last time you remember your office knows that there is those a billion dollar fra money in the insurance industry that has been investigated. And what they did, they assign an allocated team of lawyers to give compliance trainings and to show them how to do this. Like a billion dollar, billion somebody built the state and also, like they was, like a huge case. But yet, what happened? What's happening here, the state employees, the technocrat people, people who work under you, develop this kind of concept

where, if a black community, if they see like a progress of somebody building the estate, whether it's MBE, DHS, MDH, if somebody's billing the state over a certain amount of money,

Ikram Mohamed 39:59

there are no. Gated automatically, yes, so we need to. They've said that to us at DHS. Yes, they verbally. Reggie Wagner verbally said that to us. Yeah, we follow the money. And we said, we said,

Mahad Omar 40:12

how do you, how do you determine? How do you determine? They said, we look at who's billing the most. So if I'm a child care center who's located in North Minneapolis, and I happen to have 100 kids that are all low income, all sea cap. Oh yeah, that's a red flag. Yep. Straight up, yep. Jim couple, who was, who was there? Then said, Listen, this department is so racist, even if you, even if you replace the directive, you

Ikram Mohamed 40:37

can't the director is watching. That was the commissioner.

Imam Mohamed 40:41

Commissioner cannot do anything. He said. He said, We have to fire the entire like people who were working for 3035 years, 40 years in this department. The same thing, the same issue about autistic children. There is Somali huge numbers of kids who are artistic. One in 32 there's statistics, yes. And also, we don't have the services people who understand the culture of these kids, because this is don't, cannot take

Keith Ellison 41:07

care of them like the the the commissioner can't solve this. Yeah,

Mahad Omar 41:11

you know what he said? This is what he said. That was his full comment. This what he said, The commissioner, don't I got replaced Jim couple. No, no, not Jim couple, the new commissioner that got Jody, no before,

Keith Ellison 41:24

before him. Oh, Steve, kill No, no, that he was cooked. He was commerce.

Mahad Omar 41:27

He was there shortage during myself. We said, Hey, Commissioner that used to be a representative, State Rep. We went to him. I said, Tony, look at this problem. He said, Listen, I see the problem. And with this new department of the OIG, they have hired a team loose cannon. He said, all of them, I could see they're racist, but you want me to hire all of them? He said, You need to give me some time to work this out before he worked out

Cross-talk 42:01

all the investigators, ex CIA, ex cop, ex share and

Mahad Omar 42:07

all they do. Guess what? Actually, there was a lady that sent me a video the other day. She said they came to my childcare taking pictures, going around, counting how many kids are going in that particular department.

Ikram Mohamed 42:17

They took fake pictures of that girl. That man called me. He said they took pictures of my staff like it was some mug shot.

Mahad Omar 42:24

So these guys, they're giving a budget. So DHS is even worse. They're given a budget, \$5 million every single year. They've hired, what is it called, ex cops, ex you know, ex army. They're getting paid 40 plus dollars and their job because they can't find anything every single day, one of them would actually one of the one of the provider called me. He said, The mom leaves the house, picks up her kid. This guy will follow. Here's why she went. She dropped off the kids. She was late for five minutes. Entire report, like when you you can pay \$40 to follow a mom that's making \$12 what are you investigating? So we're talking about that. So basically, what

Abshir Omar 43:07

we're talking about here, general Ellison, is we have systemic patterns of abuse, waste and fraud from the departments claiming the same from minority business owners, and we've taken it far too long, but we are not willing to operate under that paradigm anymore. Okay? And we are jumping into the fight with some serious money, serious organizing, and we need you in this fight with us. And I know you're gonna get hit hard, but we are gonna commit to backing you.

Keith Ellison 43:39

How much, politically, how, from, who, where? Opponents,

Abshir Omar 43:43

establishment, they're hitting me hard all the time. Yes, so

Cross-talk 43:54

death is new. We want to

Keith Ellison 43:56

invest they threat to kill you last week. Last week, yeah, last week and oh and Ilhan gives more. So we need to

Abshir Omar 44:06

cultivate our leaders to fight for these communities, and not just that, to grow and develop and bring a new generation of leaders into office. And we are ready and willing to back those efforts all the way, but we need a true and steadfast partner to fight for basic justice, and that is your MO Well, Brother,

Keith Ellison 44:26

let me just tell you this. Of course, I'm here to help, I mean, but let me be clear, I'm not here because I think it's going to help my re election. I don't give a I don't care about no re election. I voluntarily threw my congressional career away. I'm like, I don't want to do it anymore, boring to me. So to do this, to do what I'm doing now. So of course, I didn't leave that job to do nothing in this job. I mean, is this, am I going to get more hits than I got by prosecuting a police officer officer and giving them life in prison? Right? So we're gonna, yeah. So let's just go. Let's go fight these people. So the question is, figuring out exactly how to put a stop to it, right? The how is the real question for me here, the how. How do we do it? Because we know we should do it. We kind of know a little bit about who's doing it, and now we need to figure out exactly how we do let me just

Imam Mohamed 45:26

give you an example. Yeah, yeah. Like last time when this, when there was the peak of Minneapolis election and Jacob fry, and you know this, everything was going on. So Jacob this, the community kind of faced a lot of pushback from the MPE. So this is a department where almost every person who is in the department is fighting anyone who is minority, the MBE through, you know, the mdhs. So what happened was, some of our leaders in the community went to Jacob Frey said, We cannot function. We cannot do any business. And this what's happening. So Jacob Frey went up, put together a resolution from the city council saying Amra announced from the City of Minneapolis that MBE is a department that faces in this meeting. And he put it together and he sent it. Guess what they did? They withdraw

Mahad Omar 46:23

everything. They came to him, this is what they said, Why do you want to publish this resolution the and then, after having conversation with him, they said, We're afraid of USDA coming down. So USDA said,

Imam Mohamed 46:40

this is the reason why we're, you know, we're acting the way so everybody

Keith Ellison 46:42

blames somebody else. Yes, they passed about the past the road. Yeah,

Imam Mohamed 46:49

that time they caught they shut down all the sites and all this. They shut down the kind of saying we are not. That's the time they said we're not paying the money. Stop paying. And then they release them immediately. They released the reimbursement. Okay? They said they stopped. They stopped. They not paying. They remember two months. There was three months they hold, then they released. Them. They released because of that, because he literally went to the government office. He went to because he was, like, fighting for his entry election. And so what is like a like a tie breaker? So he needs this community, and then they literally work together to Jacob, and that's why I was like, No, we have better leaders who are moral based, leaders who are in this fight with us. All we need is to have connection and to build, like, really, the bridge between us so we can our complaints. It means like, somebody like you, you could talk to govern. You could say, Hey, let's go talk to the

Keith Ellison 47:45

governor anytime. Yes, what's going

Imam Mohamed 47:46

on and also

Keith Ellison 47:48

we need but I would bet the governor doesn't know much about it.

Imam Mohamed 47:51

I know that nobody knows except the young, the people on the ground. It's sort of

Keith Ellison 47:55

like the vendors, the providers, and then the low level bureaucrat that's who knows what's going on, person answering

Mrs. Ghandi (?) 48:03

the phones to just sort of like, summarize everything that I mean. So USDA is giving the money to MD. They, once the pandemic started, they started giving out these waivers. That's why all of us were able to join the program, because we weren't before. So they made all these waivers to say, hey, we want to feed more kids. We know the food insecurity is getting even more because of the pandemic, so we want to feed more families and more children. So that was the point. Then when that happens and you have all these new people joining, saying, Hey, we're feeding all these children now, all of a sudden, that's a problem, because the type of children that are being fed, because before, when I was just white kids, there was no problem. Now, all of a sudden, all these new people can join this program, and we're saying, hey, there's actually a need. There's a huge line today that snowing. There's so many people still coming to get food because people are hungry. People have lost their jobs. People have to decide, should I get groceries or pay my electric bill this month? Like it's really serious. And instead of saying, hey, wow, we have all these new people, let's hire more staff. If people are doing something wrong. Let's do our actual jobs and find that while at the same time making sure the program is running smoothly, because these are children that need food, and it's very serious. So instead of being able to do more than one thing as a huge department with tons of money, it's need to pause while we figure something out. But as

Keith Ellison 49:20

they're pausing, they're running people out of business. There

Cross-talk 49:23

you go. That's the intention. You put \$200,000

Keith Ellison 49:37

you still got people, yeah,

Mrs. Ghandi (?) 49:40

let me pause until I get reimbursed. Saying, Hey, you just give us last week. We were counting on you

Cross-talk 49:50

services beginning of 2020, so April 30, that have not received, then we can actually then. Mustard. Could you

Keith Ellison 50:00

let me sit? Give you an email? Okay, send it to this email. So to my government email, Keith , K, E, I, T, H dot Ellison, E, L, L, I, S, O, N, at, state.ap.state.mn.us, and just send me the names of all these folks who are just hung up and like hanging on by a thread and barely gonna, and probably ain't gonna survive unless they get their money. So that I can take that list and start saying, and I can call Joey harpstead, that's the person over at education and say, What is going on? Why am I getting these complaints? And start doing and I'll call them in my office and demand some explanations, right? Well,

Salim Said 50:52

I'm one of them. Those guys are talking about April 30. I got shut down, and I gotta wait for me on bows.

Keith Ellison 50:58

You say April? April 30? Yeah, it's about the whole summer and the fall, yep, and we've had no money

Salim Said 51:04

since then. Oh yeah, I have like 10 pilots sitting up to a safari, serial pilots. The EX five is about like \$80,000 worth. So the lawsuit actually initiated from the restaurant, especially Safari. Safari was the largest, and obviously being the largest restaurant, they had that big old wedding hall. They would host families to come in pick up their food. So a lot of the people, instead of going a small restaurant, they went to theirs, because it just would go faster. They had walkie talkies.

Ikram Mohamed 51:39

They would get cooked meals.

Imam Mohamed 51:42

Go to the Safari, getting food, there's no shame in it, like you're not getting like, free. Coming to the mass, they feel like shame better, yes, or you go, this is like a he sacrificed his restaurant. We're, like, having a huge business just to run this. You know, family based, children based food services. And now there's like, so

Mrs. Ghandi (?) 52:03

then when they did that, they said restaurants can no longer participate because there are not non profits, but it wasn't the restaurant. So the way it works, and the way, legally, the way it's supposed to work, is that the sponsor holds a site of they contract out basically. So they'll say, Well, lease your place, you, but you have to close down your restaurant because you can't double dip. So then the restaurant has to close down. I don't get it. So the rest so in order for double dipping, so they would have, they could charge and having

Cross-talk 52:37

their restaurant, yeah, regular business

Ikram Mohamed 52:41

because they have to. They have to, by law. It is actual law that a site has to have a 501 C, 3c I mean, 501 but you can 501 3c so get a

Cross-talk 52:54

501 c3, yes. And still, that's the law. So that's the law. So instead of this guy, that wasn't

Salim Said 53:01

a lot, actually, they just made that law.

Ikram Mohamed 53:05

So then, so then what? What a lot of the sponsors did, one in particular that actually sued MBE, that had to sue MDE, was that they partner up with vendors and restaurants. One of them being Yes, so one of them being Safari. Now they actually have a contract with Shanghai, a Chinese vendor that's not shut down. Okay, can't touch that. Can't touch that. But Safari was denied once again this fall, so before she had to do a lawsuit. Now again, they get denied. The only way Safari can operate if, as if it was actually a nonprofit. Now, you have to remember, the property can never be a nonprofit. There's a landlord for Safaris. So that building is never going to be nonprofit owned, but the person that leases off of there can be the 501, c3, and those are the things that M, D, E does and still continue to do. And they deny, they deny us to have access. I

Imam Mohamed 54:17

mean, this is very simple, so

Keith Ellison 54:18

I already got my team digging into this. I've been, you know, and when should we come together again to discuss this?

Imam Mohamed 54:28

You have something? I would say, this is what we want. We want more of this. I mean, only based on one issue. I want to establish this team. So what's 11?

Keith Ellison 54:37

Yes, yeah. So I gotta go down to Columbia, December.