



July 1, 2026

Hearing Before the House Committee on Small Business Entitled: 250 Years of American Legacy: Small Businesses and the American Dream

Introduction

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce respectfully submits this Statement for the Record in connection with the Committee on Small Business hearing, "*250 Years of American Legacy: Small Businesses and the American Dream.*" As the nation pauses to reflect on 250 years of American history, independence, and economic achievement, the Chamber is proud to stand alongside this Committee in celebrating the small businesses that have been the backbone of the American economy—and the American Dream—since the founding of our Republic.

The Chamber commends Chairman Williams and Ranking Member Velázquez for convening this important hearing. The story of American small business is inseparable from the story of America itself: a story of ingenuity, perseverance, risk-taking, and the belief that hard work and a good idea can build something lasting. That story is worth celebrating—and worth defending.

I. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce at its Founding

Soon after America reached the halfway point towards this year's semi quincentennial celebration, President William Howard Taft recognized the need for a unified voice to represent the interests of American commerce and industry, and he championed the creation of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In 1912, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce was established by several hundred local chambers of commerce and business organizations along with 165,000 individuals and firms, mostly small businesses. From its earliest days, the Chamber was built on a foundational conviction: that free enterprise—the freedom to start a business, compete in the marketplace, and reap the rewards of one's labor—is the engine of American prosperity.

Small businesses were central to that founding vision. The Chamber was created to represent the full breadth of American commerce—the merchant on Main

Street, the craftsman in the workshop, and the entrepreneur with a new idea and the drive to pursue it.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce continues that vision today. From the yearly 4.7 million unique visitors to CO—, the Chamber’s website for tools, guidance, and insights, to the small businesses and entrepreneurs who belong to the U.S. Chamber and its 1,500 state and local chamber partners, to members of the Small Business Council who advance the Chamber’s mission and advocacy, to the ranks of the CO—100 who represent America’s best and brightest—the U.S. Chamber of Commerce exists to give each and every American small business a seat at the table and a voice in the debate.

For more than a century, the Chamber has fought for policies that allow businesses to start, grow, hire, and compete—policies that lower barriers to entry, reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens, expand access to capital, and keep taxes at levels that allow reinvestment and growth. These are not abstract principles. They are the practical conditions that allow a small business owner to open her doors, make payroll, and build something that outlasts her.

As we mark 250 years of American independence, the Chamber is proud to say that its founding mission—defending free enterprise and the businesses that embody it—remains as vital today as it was in 1912.

II. The Chamber’s Small Business Advocacy

The U.S. Chamber’s commitment to small business is not merely historical. It is active, ongoing, and institutionalized through the U.S. Chamber’s advocacy efforts.

Last month, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce hosted the 100th tax roundtable with its local chamber of commerce partners, Members of Congress, and small businesses. These roundtables have given the Chamber an opportunity to educate small businesses on incentives in the Working Families Tax Cuts Act and for Members of Congress to hear directly from Main Street employers.

The Chamber’s Small Business Council members regularly appear before this Committee to share their experiences and perspectives as the Committee conducts its valuable work. In fact, Small Business Council member and founder of Murphy’s Naturals and The Loading Dock, Philip Freeman, is one of the witnesses who are providing testimony for this hearing.

It is an honor for the Chamber to assist the Small Business Committee and to bring the small business perspective to Congress. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce will never stop working to ensure that the unique challenges facing small employers are part of broader policy debates in Congress, the administration, and in the courts.

III. Defending the American Dream for the Next 250 Years

For 250 years, free enterprise has been the foundation of American growth, innovation, and rising living standards. It continues to earn broad support from voters across both parties—76% of Americans say they want America to remain a free enterprise nation. However, the Chamber is concerned by efforts to erode public support for free enterprise and business. The ultimate objective seems to be a redefinition of the relationship between government and markets—to replace the free enterprise consensus that drove American prosperity with a model in which government directs economic outcomes, picks winners and losers, and treats successful businesses as problems to be managed rather than as drivers of national prosperity.

Small businesses will not be spared. They will be among the first and hardest hit. When trade barriers raise the cost of inputs, small manufacturers and retailers bear the burden. When excessive regulation multiplies compliance costs, small businesses—which lack the legal and compliance departments of large corporations—are disproportionately harmed. When capital is misallocated by government mandate rather than market signal, the entrepreneurs and startups that depend on private investment suffer most.

IV. What is Needed to Defend Free Enterprise

The defense of free enterprise will be measured by whether it remains the defining framework for economic growth and opportunity in the United States—whether policymakers are equipped to advance it, whether state-level threats are identified and stopped, and whether the broader public once again sees business as a force for progress. For small businesses, success means a policy environment in which the next generation of entrepreneurs can start a business, compete on a level playing field, and build something that lasts.

Conclusion

As the nation marks 250 years of American independence, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is proud to stand with the Committee on Small Business in honoring the entrepreneurs, innovators, and risk-takers who have built this country from the ground

up. Small businesses are not just an economic category—they are the living expression of the American Dream: the belief that in this country, with hard work, a good idea, and the freedom to pursue it, anyone can build something of lasting value.

That dream is worth celebrating. It is also worth defending.

The Chamber was founded to defend free enterprise, and it stands ready to continue that core mission with renewed urgency and purpose. We urge the Members of this Committee—and the Congress as a whole—to join the Chamber in its fight for free enterprise: to resist the forces that would replace the free enterprise consensus with government direction and control, to champion policies that allow small businesses to start and grow, and to ensure that the next 250 years of American history are as full of entrepreneurial achievement as the last.

The American Dream is not a relic of the past. It is a promise for the future—one that free enterprise makes possible, and one that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is committed to keeping.