

Testimony – House Committee on Small Business

Good morning Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the Committee. My name is Nick Luciano. I grew up in Maryland, but for the last ten years I've called Weatherford, Texas home. I came to Texas, fell in love with the western lifestyle — riding, roping, and rodeo — and built my life there.

Before I ever made a piece of content, I earned a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of North Texas and worked for three years as a mechanical engineer for the Department of Defense. My job was to design protective systems and run high-speed cameras to safeguard our soldiers. That experience taught me problem-solving, systems thinking, and responsibility at the highest level. Today, I bring that same mindset to the digital space.

Along the way, I've built an audience of over 8 million followers across platforms and created the third most liked TikTok in the entire world. That moment showed me not only the global reach of this new digital landscape, but also that I've played a role in helping craft and shape it.

I first started posting content not to get famous, but to help people. I realized that something as simple as a video could reach someone at just the right time. In college, I'd get messages from classmates saying my posts encouraged them to keep pushing forward. Years later, I've received messages from people saying my videos literally saved their life. One man wrote that he was sitting on the tailgate of his truck, gun in hand, ready to end it all — but after coming across my video, he didn't pull the trigger.

Moments like that showed me that this work is bigger than clicks and likes. It's about impact. It's about using digital platforms to reach people, to build trust, and to create positive change.

That's where my journey shifted from being “just an influencer” to becoming what I call a creatorpreneur. Influencers chase trends and attention. Creatorpreneurs build businesses, solve problems, and create jobs — while still connecting with millions of people online.

For me, that meant founding Tratter House, the first western lifestyle content house. What started as a group of creators under one roof has grown into a business that partners with major brands like Ariat, Spotify, and Red Bull; supports country artists like Bailey Zimmerman and Will Moseley; and now focuses on artist development and marketing strategy.

We don't just post videos — we roadmap careers. We help artists build merchandise lines, manage online stores, and craft content strategies that cut through the noise. We also run a nonprofit, the Tratter Foundation, where each year we fly a family to Texas to give them a once-in-a-lifetime western experience.

Tratter House has created jobs directly — my co-founders, full-time team members, editors, accountants, merch managers — and indirectly, through partnerships with printers, fulfillment companies, record labels, rodeos, and small businesses across the country.

Our biggest win to date has been helping a new artist, Tyce Delk, launch his debut single. With our strategy, his very first release hit over 5 million streams, reached number one on Spotify Viral 50 in both the U.S. and Canada, climbed to number six on Texas radio, and charted globally. That's not just a viral moment — that's building a foundation for a sustainable career, and it's proof that digital creators can generate real economic results.

But here's the challenge: when many people hear the word "influencer," they picture kids making silly videos for clicks. That's the stigma I want to break. Behind the scenes, many of us are educated, disciplined, and purpose-driven. We're running teams, managing payroll, filing taxes, and partnering with brands and small businesses. We are contributing to the economy just like any other entrepreneur.

The term I prefer is creatorpreneur. Because yes, I create content — but I also employ people, serve clients, and build businesses that last.

My vision for the future is clear: the creators who endure — who build trust, serve their audiences, and innovate in business — are the next generation of entrepreneurs. We're not chasing clicks. We're building foundations. We understand how to attract millions of people online, nurture those relationships, and then channel that trust into businesses, nonprofits, and movements that make a real difference.

If I could leave you with one takeaway, it's this: people like me aren't in it for fame or money. We're in it to change lives, build businesses, and strengthen communities. We are part of a new economy — one rooted in trust, creativity, and purpose.

So when you think about "influencers," I ask you to see us not just as entertainers, but as creatorpreneurs — innovators, small business owners, and job creators who are here to stay.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your questions.