

Congress of the United States  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Small Business  
2561 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-0515

**MEMORANDUM**

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**To:** Members, House Committee on Small Business  
**From:** Chairwoman Nydia Velazquez  
**Date:** Wednesday, May 8, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.  
**Re:** Full Committee Hearing titled “Honoring the Nation’s Small Business Heroes”

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The Committee on Small Business will meet for a hearing titled, “Honoring the Nation’s Small Business Heroes.” The hearing is scheduled to begin at **10:00 A.M. on Wednesday, May 8, 2019 in Room 2360 of the Rayburn House Office Building.**

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has designated May 5-11 as its National Small Business Week. To honor all of America’s entrepreneurs, the House Small Business Committee is saluting “Heroes of Small Business,” those leaders who exemplify the determination, hard work, and creativity that showcases the American entrepreneurial spirit. Entrepreneurs from across the country will testify on their small business success stories. The Committee will examine the important role these firms play in creating jobs, growing our economy, and investing in our local communities. The Witnesses will include:

**Panel One**

- Ms. Gia Giasullo Owner Brooklyn Pharmacy & Soda Fountain Brooklyn, NY
- Ms. Amy Fox President & Operations Spiral Brewery Hastings, MN
- Mr. Nels Leader Vice President Bread Alone Bakery Lake Katrine, NY
- Mr. Robert Hoffman Broker Robert Hoffman Realty Inc. Albert Lea, MN

**Panel Two**

- Mr. Jason Brochu President and Co-Owner Pleasant River Lumber Dover-Foxcroft, ME
- Mr. Kristofer Sabey President Surf Liquors & Market Seaside Heights, NJ
- Mr. Bill Skalish Owner Granite Tech, Inc. and The Benchmark GRP, LLC Landenberg, PA
- Mr. Jerry Kortesmaki Owner London Road Rental Center Duluth, MN

**Panel Three**

- Mr. Dave Walton Farmer Iowa Soybean Association Wilton, IA
- Ms. Brittney Reese Co-Founder and Head FIT Coach FIT & NU Aurora, CO
- Ms. Colleen Cruze Bhatti Owner Cruze Farm Knoxville, TN
- Mr. Shawn Pulford CEO LB Water Chambersburg, PA

## **Introduction**

America's small businesses are a catalyst for creating employment opportunities and driving growth in the U.S. economy. The estimated 30 million small firms in the U.S., represent 99.7 percent of all employers and generate two-thirds of all net new jobs. Because of these firms' crucial role, it is important to formulate federal policy in a manner that supports their continued development. Today's hearing will allow Members of Congress to hear directly from small businesses across the country. Small businesses will talk about the challenges they face starting a small business, the rewarding experience of building a successful company, and the impact they have on their local communities. Below are biographies of the witnesses that will testify.

## **PANEL ONE**

### **Ms. Gia Giasullo Owner Brooklyn Farmacy & Soda Fountain Brooklyn, NY**

Ms. Giasullo is the co-founder and creative director of Brooklyn Farmacy & Soda Fountain. As the daughter of a Greenwich village shopkeeper it is maybe not surprising to see her helping serve others. Originally a 1920's apothecary shop in Brooklyn, NY, Ms. Giasullo took decades of dust and clutter and turned a nostalgic storefront into a modern-day soda fountain. Ms. Giasullo received a 504 loan from the NYBDC and has been recognized as the Small Business Family Business of the Year.

### **Ms. Amy Fox President & Operations Spiral Brewery Hastings, MN**

Spiral Brewery has been open for just over a year now, and in that time, it has proven itself to be a destination brewery and taproom that excels at sharing its craft with its patrons. Spiral Brewery received partial financing from an SBA 504 Loan working in connection with Pioneer Bank and the Prairieland Economic Development Corporation. Over the past year, Spiral Brewery has become a destination for beer lovers from across Minnesota's metropolitan area and a beer to seek out at liquor stores, bars, and restaurants in our region. Amy Fox has a B.A. in Communication Studies from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN. She previously worked in advertising for 12 years, primarily focusing on project management, brand development and training, before leaving to open and operate Spiral Brewery.

### **Mr. Nels Leader Vice President Bread Alone Bakery Lake Katrine, NY**

Having graduated from Colby College and NYU's Stern School of Business, Mr. Leader joins is as Vice-President of Bread Alone Bakery. Baking organic breads since 1983, Bread Alone Bakery has grown from a one oven operation, into the ambitious and entrepreneurial organization it is today. Bread Alone bakes many products, but its most popular is its Certified Organic sliced breads. Bread Alone products are available throughout NYC, the Hudson Valley and surrounding communities. Mr. Leader and Bread Alone Bakery look to the future as well, celebrating a recent 35-year anniversary with a solar panel project that will produce 25 percent of its energy from solar power.

### **Mr. Robert Hoffman Broker Robert Hoffman Realty Inc. Albert Lea, MN**

Robert Hoffman Realty Incorporated is a small Real Estate Brokerage and Property Management Firm in Albert Lea Minnesota. RI-IR is licensed in Minnesota and Iowa and specializes in residential, rental & commercial real estate sales and management in Southern Minnesota. Owners Angie and Robert Hoffman are each licensed in real estate and members of the Realtors

Association and Minnesota Multi Housing Association. The Hoffman's own and manage 80 rentals and are also active volunteering with their local Humane Society, Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club, Heritage Preservation Committee, Children's Center and local BPOU. Robert & Angie do not have children but have four rescue dogs; Max, Jack, Lucy & Eddie.

## **PANEL TWO**

### **Mr. Jason Brochu President and Co-Owner Pleasant River Lumber Dover-Foxcroft, ME**

Mr. Brochu is President and Co-Owner of Pleasant River Lumber, a family-owned Maine business with four generations of experience in the forest products industry. Pleasant River Lumber is a 100% U.S., family-owned Maine business and over the years, has built our reputation on quality, service and attention to detail. Their mills produce over 100 million board feet of spruce dimensional lumber and eastern white pine annually, for customers throughout the East Coast region. Pleasant River Lumber prints an American flag on every stick of spruce they make. When he is not at work, Mr. Brochu enjoys growing his own food with his family at home.

### **Mr. Kristofer Sabey President Surf Liquors & Market Seaside Heights, NJ**

Mr. Sabey is the president of Surf Liquors & Market in Seaside Heights, NJ. Beginning his career as a journeyman carpenter, Mr. Sabey has gained skills in industries from construction to consulting and has directed his entrepreneurial efforts to an equally varied lineup of businesses. Surf Liquors has been in business for over 30 years carrying the largest selection of beer, wine and spirits in Seaside Heights.

### **Mr. Bill Skalish Owner Granite Tech, Inc. and The Benchmark GRP, LLC Landenberg, PA**

Bill Skalish offered products and services to the hospitality industry for over 35 years. During his sales career, he became the top performing independent sales rep for Vermax in Salt Lake City, UT and in the early 90's accepted the position of National Sales and Marketing Director. After leaving Vermax he moved back to Pennsylvania in 1999 to once again become an independent factory rep for several manufactures. Prior to that, and right out of high school, Skalish served a four-year apprenticeship with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and became an Inside Journeyman Wiremen for IBEW L.U. 654.

Currently Bill Skalish owns two companies, The Benchmark GRP, LLC and Granite Tech, Inc. Benchmark is an independent rep organization that performs the sales and marketing functions and Granite Tech is structured solely as an import company. Granite Tech and Benchmark GRP, LLC current customer base includes the hospitality, multi-family, senior living and student housing industries. In addition to Skalish professional career, he also had the privilege of serving on the Board of Supervisors for Franklin Township located in Chester County, PA.

### **Mr. Jerry Kortesmaki Owner London Road Rental Center Duluth, MN**

Mr. Kortesmaki is the owner of London Road Rental Center in Duluth, MN. Jerry is an expert in the field. London Road Rental offers tools and equipment rentals in its Duluth, MN location and party wedding and event rentals and supplies in its Superior WI location. Thanks to Mr. Kortesmaki's hard work, he now runs a business that spans Northern Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Mr. Kortesmaki is also active in the American Rental Association, advocating the rental industry's growth.

### **PANEL THREE**

#### **Mr. Dave Walton Farmer Iowa Soybean Association Wilton, IA**

Dave Walton, Wilton, farms with his wife and two sons. They grow soybeans and corn, in addition to raising beef cattle and sheep. Walton is on the Iowa Soybean Association (ISA) policy advisory council, and wants to position ISA as the premiere ag organization and continue that focus not only on trade but also research.

#### **Ms. Brittney Reese Co-Founder and Head FIT Coach FIT & NU Aurora, CO**

Ms. Brittney Reese realized she was selling a lifestyle through her work and physical appearance. It was her time working at her neighborhood gym as a Membership Advisor, and training with the top trainers that inspired her to learn more about the body and how to strengthen and mold her own. Therefore, she took matters into her own hands to inspire the masses by becoming a fitness model in 2013 and she received her Zumba certification during a 3-month backpacking trip in Central America.

Upon her return, Brittney and her sister, Joslyn decided to dedicate their life's work to help women of color in their hometown of Aurora, CO reach their *optimal* wellness through fun and inspiring workouts which eventually led to the inception of their habit-based fitness & nutrition company, FIT & NU; founded in 2015. As a highly requested Group Fitness Instructor turned Certified Personal Trainer, Brittney has touched the lives of over 200 women in her hometown and many more online. Brittney believes exercise and the camaraderie of energy-focused group fitness contributes not only to the female physiology, but also to the basic human needs: self-actualization, esteem, love and belonging, safety and security. She hopes that the good that is going in to the pursuit of helping other women create healthy habits will make FIT & NU the nation's number one fitness and nutrition company to serve and save the lives of women of color.

#### **Ms. Colleen Cruze Bhatti Owner Cruze Farm Knoxville, TN**

Ms. Cruze Bhatti is the first woman to lead her family's successful dairy farm. She earned a B.S. in agricultural science from the University of Tennessee in 2011, and since graduation, has used both innovation and marketing expertise to transform the farm's dairy products into one of Knoxville's most well-known brands.

Today, Cruze Farm distributes its dairy products throughout Tennessee. The farm sells premium soft serve ice cream at its storefronts and employs around 70 Knoxvilleans. Ms. Cruze Bhatti and her husband, Manjit, are raising their children, Amery and William, on the family dairy farm in hope that they will carry on the family business another generation. In 2005, the Cruze family placed a conservation easement on the property to assist it in becoming a "forever farm."

#### **Mr. Shawn Pulford CEO LB Water Chambersburg, PA**

Mr. Pulford is in his fourth year as CEO of LB Water Service, Inc. LB Water has been providing quality water and wastewater solutions for decades. Over time, they have grown from one sales

office in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, to eight full-service locations covering Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. Their large inventory and proprietary fleet of delivery vehicles ensures that they can supply the products, service, and support when their customers need it the most.

Shawn has lived in various places throughout the United States in his career, but he considers his birthplace of Elmira, N.Y., his home. He is a graduate of PMC/Weidner University where he received his degree in Business Administration. Shawn is the proud father of three grown children. In his spare time, Shawn enjoys being with family and friends, playing golf, watching baseball, and working at LB Water.