

**National Small Business Week** | Celebrating our Main Street Champions

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*Testimony of **Eric Childs***

Proprietor/Owner, Mind's Eye Comics

**Mind's Eye Comics**

200 E Travelers Trail, STE 105

Burnsville, MN

Thank you, Chairwoman Velázquez, Ranking Member Luetkemeyer, and other members of the House Committee on Small Business for this opportunity to share my testimony today.

Also, thank you to Representative Craig for the invitation to testify at today's small business hearing.

This is truly an honor and a privilege to be a participant in representing the small businesses of Minnesota's 2nd Congressional District and residing city Burnsville.

Today, I'll do my best to express a few moments significant to my journey thus far. In hope to convey who I am and how I came to be the Proprietor/Owner of Mind's Eye Comics, and the positive difference I choose to make in my community utilizing my business.

Early on in my life I was encouraged, I was taught that I could be anything I aspired to be and achieve anything I put my mind to. All that's required is a little hard work and dedication. Simple, but powerful concepts. These ideas Reinforced in faith, and a belief that God has a purpose for each of us. For these lessons I am extremely grateful. Thank you, Herbert Logan Childs and Barbara Sue Childs, my parents. Thank you, for your wisdom, integrity, character, and belief in me. Thank you, Ms. Davanni for seeing the value in all your 4th grade students including myself. Thank you for being willing to sacrifice your own hard-earned money for your class, and on occasion even your personal time. All to find a way to engage, help, and encourage each of us. For me, it was comic books you would discover to be the catalyst for completed assignments and instilling a passion for reading. Thank you, Dr. Helgeson my High School Humanities instructor for showing us there is greatness in all of us and celebrating all cultures in your class. Each one of one of these individuals has impacted my life tremendously and left a lasting impression on me. One of positivity, inspiration, encouragement, and belief that we are all connected and can make a positive difference in lives of others.

I share these personal insights of my past influences first because these are the philosophies, and beliefs at the core of the businessman before you today. These ideas would prove to be instrumental to the future core purpose of Mind's Eye Comics and would be put to the test beginning a little over Three years ago after acquiring the business in 2018.

Mind's Eye Comics first opened in 1998 by Mr. Andrew Troth. Mr. Troth established a comic shop, in my opinion, that finally showcased the medium the way it deserved, much like any other respectable bookstore. The beautiful layout, clean, well-organized space would become my favorite comic bookstore in Minnesota. With excellent customer service, a welcoming atmosphere, and a wide selection. Andrew truly had raised the bar on what it meant to be a comic shop. For twenty years I was a patron of Mind's Eye Comics. Later in life would become the place I brought my own children to encourage their reading. In 2018 Mr. Troth announced he'd planned to retire and would be closing the store. I couldn't watch a place the was so important to many, and so unique in our community come to an end. I couldn't accept it... So much so, I asked Mr. Troth if he'd consider selling the store. To which he replied "No. Unless of course you're inquiring for yourself. For you Eric, I would consider it, your hearts in the right place." This marks the beginning of the next chapter; The baton has been passed.

Thank you, Mr. Troth for trusting me with what you started, and considering me a worthy ambassador of this truly unique and special place of culture, imagination, and creativity.

Now instead of closure I saw opportunity. I saw an opportunity to build community, inspire, and enrich the lives of others.

Mind's Eye Comics Now Advocates for literacy, makes black history more accessible through graphic novels, assist educators in discovering alternate graphic source materials to course work, provides an outlet for the works of independent and minority creative teams, and still serves as your community hub of all things Geek!

In closing I'll share a story from my first summer open in Burnsville in 2018.

Two young boys, no older than twelve years of age, came in and began excitedly perusing the comics on the shelves. One of which immediately after making his purchase, rushes over to the reading nook takes a seat. He dives into one of the comic books he'd just bought, he was so excited as he read. Grinning, completely captivated, and flipping through the pages. The other young man soon joined his buddy in the reading nook. He asked his friend that was reading so happily, "is your mom going to be okay with you spending all your money on comics?" To which he replied, "she's always trying to get me to read, I'm reading!"