



It is a privilege and an honor to address you today. Thank you for listening to our story.

My name is Natasha Hudson. My husband, Chad, and I own **Hudson's On Mercer Street**, a live music venue in Dripping Springs, Texas.

Dripping Springs is a fast growing community about 20 minutes west of Austin. It is lovingly described as, "WEST OF WEIRD".

Dripping Springs is home to many locally owned wineries, breweries, distilleries, boutiques, and wedding venues and is a great spot for tourists and locals.

We started Hudson's On Mercer Street almost 6 years ago and it has become a creative and encouraging musical hub and event center for our community. We feature local and regional acts, party bands, singer/songwriters, karaoke and open mic. We also offer music lessons for any age and skill level with an emphasis on live performance.

We are all about building confidence and loving everyone who comes through our doors. Having a huge passion for our community, we never say "no" when asked to donate our venue to raise funds for foundations and individuals in need. Our chance to give back is what we missed the most during the pandemic closures.

A music venue may sound frivolous to some, but to us, it's our dream and the way we serve our community. This venue is also the way we support our family of 5 kids and provide jobs for many to do the same.

In 2020 we were shut down for nearly 7 months. By offering live streams of musical acts and virtual music lessons, we fought to keep our business afloat and help provide income for local musicians and bands who counted on us for work. But that only took us all so far.

When we were near the bottom of our business and personal bank accounts and had gone through all personal savings, we were given a sign of hope when we were approached by my Congressman Williams' team. They shared with us a plan that made us feel encouraged and validated.

We waited eagerly for the Shuttered Venues Operators Grant to officially open their application process. We read all we could and joined webinars to help us understand what information they would be requesting.

As prepared as we thought we were, and with the help of our CPA, the process was still a bit overwhelming and was difficult to navigate at times. With website complications and application dates pushed back, we grew weary. However, complications were completely understandable because this was the first time support of this stature had been offered to music venues.

Thanks to the grace of God, the hard work of our brothers and sisters in congress and the SBA, we were awarded a generous amount to cover our losses from 2020. It came in the nick of time and single handedly put Hudson's On Mercer Street back on the map with no fear of demise. For that we are eternally grateful. What you did for our family owned business is incredible and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

The Shuttered Venues Operators Grant re-paved the road for success and ensured that our business will remain alive and strong. We aspire to provide more community outreach and hope that the joy of music and fellowship is the legacy of Hudson's.

Thank you for your time.