

**Opening Statement of
The Honorable Roger Williams
Vice Ranking Member of the Committee on Small Business
Subcommittee on Underserved, Agricultural, and Rural Business
Development
Hearing: “Rural American Recovery: The Role of Small Businesses and
Entrepreneurship”
July 13, 2021**

Thank you, Chairman Golden, and thank you for allowing me to fill in for Ranking Member Hagedorn during his absence today.

Today’s hearing is of the upmost importance, as we are going to be exploring the nation’s rural small businesses, how they have fared under COVID-19, and what they face moving forward.

Despite their strong work ethic and dedication, America’s small businesses, entrepreneurs, and startups faced extreme challenges dealing with COVID-19 and the state and local shutdown measures that followed.

Without having the ability to make safe, sound, and prudent business decisions, mandates were handed down that caused businesses to change their operations or even close.

Thankfully, Congress worked with former President Trump to enact and activate a number of critically important small business relief programs, including the quick moving Paycheck Protection Program.

These relief programs, combined with states opening up, started the sequence of events that provided small businesses with the opportunity to look forward toward recovery.

Unfortunately, not all states have maintained the same speed of reopening. In my state of Texas, we had the benefit of opening up quickly and we are seeing results as compared to states that have stayed closed for a longer period of time.

Moreover, as the country opens back up, small businesses are now faced with a set of difficult realities.

While historically operating on thin margins, America's Main Street is facing a new threat of rising inflation. The price of everything from gasoline to products they use every day are climbing at the fastest pace we have seen in almost a decade. In fact, just this morning, the Federal Government published the latest Consumer Price Index numbers, which show inflation increasing to 5.4 percent when measured year over year.

Additionally, labor and workforce issues continue to challenge business owners as they search for employees. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are over 9.2 million job openings across the nation. Unfortunately, help wanted signs are becoming all too familiar

On top of inflation and not being able to find workers, the Biden Administration is threatening the nation's best job creators with tax increases.

Whether it is increases to the individual tax rate, the corporate rate, or increasing capital gains taxes, these changes will hurt small businesses directly and indirectly and have lasting effects for small businesses in my state of Texas to Minnesota, and beyond.

Instead of promoting a pro-growth environment to help small businesses recover quickly from the past year and half, this Administration is putting up roadblocks and hurdles.

Over the past year, this Committee, and especially this Subcommittee, have put a focus on strengthening some of the nation's COVID programs for rural small businesses. We have found common ground on rural issues in the past, and I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to find solutions for all of our rural small businesses.

As Members of Congress, we must work together to bring back the pro-growth environment that the nation experienced prior to COVID-19.

I look forward to today's conversation and I especially want to thank our witnesses for being with us. Instead of running their businesses, they are with us to discuss these important topics. I thank you for joining us, and I look forward to hearing from each of you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.