

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
BEFORE THE SENATE STATE, VETERANS & MILITARY AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON SB 21-199: REMOVING BARRIERS TO CERTAIN PUBLIC
OPPORTUNITIES**

April 13, 2021

**Alejandro Flores-Muñoz, Owner
Combi Taco a Ghost Kitchen Taqueria**

Thank you Chairwoman Gonzales, Vice Chair Coleman, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Alejandro Flores-Muñoz and I am the owner of Combi Taco a Ghost Kitchen Taqueria, located in Denver, and I own and operate several other business ventures. Thank you for allowing me to share comments in favor of Senate Bill 21-199, which will remove barriers to access certain public opportunities for undocumented entrepreneurs like me.

Undocumented immigrants encounter an uphill battle to achieve success. Our journey starts at a disadvantage, as we often lack access to resources or lack the knowledge of existing resources. These barriers also prevent us from accessing funding that could help us expand our businesses and make a living to support our families. However, we're also used to overcoming barriers and we can achieve success through hard work.

But as a DACA recipient and an entrepreneur of all trades, I always come across the same issue: I'm unable to get occupational licenses to legitimize my businesses. I have found ways to work within the system and worked with city officials to remove some of the bureaucratic hurdles of the process. But I worry about those who are not as familiar with bureaucracy or who can't speak the language because they face an added layer of obstacles to advocate for themselves and their businesses.

Colorado officials cannot afford to exclude thousands of undocumented entrepreneurs from actively participating in our economy. Immigrant entrepreneurs like me create 1 in 10 jobs in the United States and are the lifeblood of the small business community. We want to work within the legal system, and we want to fully participate and contribute to our communities, but we need support from lawmakers if we are going to survive the economic crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is why I strongly support SB 21-199 and urge you to consider supporting this legislation. Removing these barriers will open opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs to apply for professional and business licenses, and it will legalize our businesses so we can access critical funding to help stabilize our businesses and continue to create jobs in our state. Additionally, having a business license can help us work with dignity and stay out of the shadows.

State and local officials have the power to eliminate the costly and inefficient requirement of verifying legal status when determining eligibility for public benefits, which would ultimately help our agencies run more efficiently and pave the way to offer more resources for immigrant, undocumented Coloradans.

Getting a business license is only one of the many hurdles that undocumented entrepreneurs face when trying to build a business, and this is one action you can take today to allow us to operate more freely in our communities. I urge you to pass this legislation to support our immigrant small business community in Colorado.

Thank you,
Alejandro Flores-Muñoz