

**BEYOND THE TRAILHEAD: SUPPORTING OUTDOOR  
RECREATION IN AN UNCERTAIN ECONOMY**

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**HEARING**  
BEFORE THE  
**COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS  
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**  
OF THE  
**UNITED STATES SENATE**  
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

—————  
MAY 30, 2025  
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COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

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# CONTENTS

MAY 30, 2025

## OPENING STATEMENTS

	Page
John W. Hickenlooper, U.S. Senator from Colorado .....	1

## WITNESSES

Mr. Travis Campbell, CEO, Eagle Creek, Steamboat Springs, CO .....	4
Prepared statement .....	7
Mr. Mike Mojica, Founder, Outdoor Element, Englewood, CO .....	9
Prepared statement .....	11
Mr. Trent Bush, Founder and CEO, ARTILECT Studio, Boulder, CO .....	13
Prepared statement .....	15



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**FRIDAY, MAY 30, 2025**

UNITED STATES SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS  
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:11 p.m., in Lanny and Sharon Martin Family Foundation Room, History Colorado Center, Hon. John Hickenlooper, presiding.

Present: Senator Hickenlooper [presiding].

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HICKENLOOPER**

Senator HICKENLOOPER. We've now officially gaveled in. Welcome, all of you. I appreciate you to come and join us for this field hearing for the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, basically, about the challenges and opportunities that are facing entrepreneurs and small businesses in the outdoor recreation industry.

Before we get started, I want to thank History Colorado for this amazing space, this amazing building, and all that they do to make sure we understand where we're coming from. And actually, each of these entrepreneurs has origin stories, and I'm sure we'll hear a lot of that today. Understanding how we got to where we are, and how we should take facts and use evidence to make sure our future is better, is a key part of what these hearings are all about.

I'd like to also give thanks to Chair Joni Ernst, Senator Ernst from Iowa, and Ranking Member Markey. Neither of them could be here, but they signed off on this, and are supportive of making sure that we take the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee out into the country, and get all the information we can.

Also want to talk to committee staff for the Small Business Entrepreneurship Subcommittee, because they do the real work and my own staff as well, who you guys have met, and spent countless hours putting all this together. So, the committee staff, our staff, it's a great partnership.

I've always been proud to represent small businesses in Colorado. Up and down Main Street, we've had a wonderful—this process of creating ecosystem that welcomes and celebrates entrepreneurship, is something that we were very intentional about, starting 20 years ago. And there are literally thousands of people that own that, that have put time and effort and created businesses, that prove that

this not just the backbone of our country, but it is the heart, it is the lungs, it is the digestive system—I'll cut it off. [Laughter.]

Anyway, I came of age in small business. I started the first brew pub in Colorado, my gosh, 1986. I don't even want to say how old that is, that's almost 40 years ago. I guess it was 88 we finally got it open, it took me two years to open the thing.

I understand a lot of the challenges that these guys are facing. We were just in there talking about some of the challenges that we're going to go over today. I lived a lot of that; the anxiety that envelops real challenges when you're in small business. And you know that each decision is not the last decision, it's a decision that's going to either make things a little better or maybe a little worse, if you don't get the right decision, and you don't have time to sit and think about it. You've got to keep making the decision, keep moving your business forward.

Our small businesses are economic boosters to our rural communities, to our urban communities, our suburban communities. They improve healthcare, they drive innovation, they create jobs, they improve our education system.

Here in Colorado, if you just look at the outdoor recreation industry, we're talking in excess of \$17 billion of the state's, GDP. And there are some people that think that's conservative. We're in a time now with this notion of tariffs, where I think those policies threaten many of our small businesses, not all, but many, many of our small businesses.

And I think the more we can hear those stories, and recognize you know—I've talked to people in the trade office and I've talked to other Republican Senators, I'm not sure I've ever seen a place where the types of tariffs that have been discussed, were effective. These large mass scale tariffs that have been contemplated, not just for China, but even for NATO—our allies. This is the kind of tariff environment that we saw when I was a kid in the '60s and '70s. South American countries, other developing countries, used similar tariffs to try and protect—they wanted to limit their imports, and they wanted to push forward and hope to stimulate their own indigenous industry, and it never worked.

They ended up with spiraling inflation and interest rates. Basically, there was a freezing that took place in their entire economy. So as their economy stagnated, the value of their currency, whatever it was, would diminish. And I think we face the same things here. We're going to look at weakening the dollar. And at the same time, all the uncertainty is, this making people hesitate and, in many cases, put off any significant decision. They won't commit to a purchase or a new project because of all the uncertainty.

I think these guys, all small businesses, want to focus on serving their customers. But having to navigate the chaos we see right now is a real challenge. And I think the tariffs are a blunt instrument. I understand where they're coming from, but I think there are better ways we can deal with this. Certainly, the people that are going to elegant dinners in Mar-a-Lago or anywhere, this isn't as much an issue for them. But many small businesses are really caught up in this storm and struggling to survive.

Along with my Senate colleagues, we introduced the Small Business Liberation Act, which would exempt small businesses like

these from these reckless tariffs. Again, we've been pushed back on that and on and so many things.

Last week, we had Kelly Loeffler, who's the Administrator for the Small Business Administration. She was talking about how the tariffs really were good news for small businesses. But I think I've been going around the state this whole week, and I've talked to a dozen small businesses and haven't heard anyone say that yet, that they look at this as any kind of a benefit.

The recent CNBC survey, only 30 percent of our small business owners believe our economy's heading in the right direction. 70 percent felt that our economy is heading towards a recession. They think the country is going the wrong direction. We haven't seen pessimism like this since COVID, which was a global pandemic, obviously. But I think that we are on the precipice of a recession, and it could be a serious recession. And the losses we will all endure will be structural, in other words, they will have a long tail.

Obviously, tariffs aren't the only challenges these guys face. Many of the components of this bill that was passed in the house, the budget bill, are also going to be structurally challenging. There's a plan in there, it was pulled out, but once they put something in, they pulled it out of this budget bill, but it'll probably find its way back into something else. But they had a plan to sell hundreds of thousands of acres of public land. And once you start that, it's hard to say where it's going to go, but it's certainly not going to go in a good direction.

In that budget, it's hard not to see labor shortages. They're reducing or eliminating a lot of the money used to address climate change. It is a challenging time. Anyway, I'm excited to be joined by these guys, if I'm any good, which is debatable, but any good at this senate business, I'm going to hopefully leave this today on an upbeat.

Because it took me two years to raise the money when I first started Wynkoop, I couldn't get my own mother to invest. [Laughter.]

But I always said, sometimes I'd have to get out of bed and paint a smile on my face. I'd have to look in the mirror and say, all right, let's go get them, because I've never succeeded at anything that mattered, if it was really challenging, by thinking I couldn't do it, or by thinking it would look like, you know, it wasn't going to happen.

I loved talking to these guys for 20 minutes before we started this. This panel of witnesses embodies that determination and commitment that it takes for small businesses to succeed.

Our first witness is Travis Campbell. He's the owner and CEO of Eagle Creek, an adventure travel gear company that's based in Steamboat Springs. It's a little unfair that he gets to live in Steamboat Springs, and most of us don't. Prior to his time at Eagle Creek, Mr. Campbell spent time at VF, working at North Face and Smart Wall.

He's got a Bachelor's of Science in Civil Engineering from Duke University, MBA from Northwestern. Which is where my wife also went, to Duke. She did not study engineering, but she also got an MBA from Northwestern.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Fantastic.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. What a scary world. [Laughter.]

Next up, we have Mr. Mike Mojica, founder of Outdoor Element, an adventure survival gear business based in Englewood. Mr. Mojica spent the bulk of his career as a mechanical engineer in aerospace, real engineer, I'm just kidding, this is still real engineering. But he was a mechanical engineer, before turning his small business dream into a reality. And he had older degree, an engineering degree from the University of Texas at Arlington.

And then, rounding out the group is Trent Bush, founder and co-CEO of ARTILECT Studios, based here in Boulder. Mr. Bush comes from a family of outdoor recreation entrepreneurs, and has served in previous roles at Mountain Hardware, Black Diamond Equipment, and Burton Snowboards. He has a degree from the University of Colorado Boulder and started his first business while a student in Boulder High School. I mean, is it possible that boulder's always been a hotbed of entrepreneurship? I think it is.

So, we'll start, with each one just about five minutes to make your opening statement. We'll start with Mr. Campbell, and I'll turn it over for five minutes for your opening remarks.

**STATEMENT OF MR. TRAVIS CAMPBELL, CEO, EAGLE CREEK STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO.**

Mr. CAMPBELL. Thank you, Senator Hickenlooper. Appreciate the opportunity to be here to testify today about the impacts of the current trade and tariff policy on the outdoor recreation economy.

As you said, my name's Travis Campbell. I'm the owner and CEO of Eagle Creek, a small business. I'm based in Steamboat Springs. This is our 50th anniversary as a business. My wife and I, and a few others have been the owner of this business for about four years now. As mentioned, we design and sell adventure travel gear. We make most of our product primarily in Indonesia, and then we sell it all over the world.

We're the kind of small business that America should be proud of; we pay our taxes, we comply fully with our duties and regulations, we strive to be a responsible employer, a committed partner to our customers, and a steward of the planet.

Yet in the wake of the newly announced tariffs or recently announced tariffs, it feels as though our country is systematically working against businesses like ours, raising our cost dramatically while fueling consumer anxiety that suppresses demand. And I'll make note that that demand is global demand, not just demand in the U.S.

Eagle Creek in the vast majority of the \$1.2 trillion outdoor industry, which is responsible for 5 million American jobs, depends on a complex global supply chain to manufacture the highly technical products that we sell. These goods require years of skill and specialization to produce and those capabilities do not exist in the U.S., at any level of scale required to make the goods that we produce. Building that capacity would take domestically years, if it were even possible to do.

When the reciprocal tariffs were announced on April 2nd, we had as a business, we had about \$1.8 million of purchase orders outstanding, due to ship into the U.S. in the next four months. Under our normal processes, we would pay about \$260,000 in traditional

duties and tariffs on that. And that cost is built into our business model that's existed for a while.

When we did the math on the incremental tariffs, the new bill would be an additional \$580,000. And so, if for a business our size, we don't have \$580,000 sitting in our bank account just waiting to pay that extra. And so that's a kind of shock that is simply unsustainable for a business like us. What we say is, in our 50th year of operations, we could be possibly put out of business through these kind of ill-conceived tariff plans.

Eagle Creek immediately took dramatic steps to stay afloat. We froze salary increases that we had just implemented to our teams. We halted the hiring of two really exceptional new people that we planned to bring on board. We cut spending across the board—so on vendors, on travel, on investments that we were making in growing our business this year. We've revised our sales forecast significantly lower for the year. So back to that global consumer decline in demand that we see going on. And so, when you add that all up; lower wages, fewer jobs, and less spending in the economy, I don't think that's what we're aiming for.

So, the current pause in tariff implementation does give us some breathing room. But I would say only barely. And I'll go a little off script here and say, this week there was a court injunction, I'll say around the tariffs that have changed the scenario again since I submitted my testimony three days ago. And so, I find it remarkable that today I actually have no idea what the tariffs are on my goods. And so, as a small business, to have no idea what primary input costs look like in your business, is terrifying and chaotic.

So, the uncertainty and instability continue to wreak havoc on our business. I think it's important to note it's wreaking havoc on our people. Like our teams are tired. You know, this is a stressful environment. We're asking a lot out of people to essentially plan and replan our business, what feels like almost daily. And so, it's a constant struggle to not have a view on what's going to happen and either tomorrow or let's call it July 9th.

So, it's important to understand that our outdoor products are not interchangeable with general consumer goods. These are technical complex items built to withstand extreme conditions. There's very little of U.S. manufacturing to support that. Yet technical goods are among the most heavily taxed imports we bring into the U.S. So, the trade weighted duty average for outdoor gear is over 14 percent, compared to just 2.7 percent for other consumer goods. Products like waterproof backpacks and footwear are especially hard hit.

Historically, the outdoor industry has had bipartisan, congressionally-approved tools like the Generalized System of Preferences, GSP, and the Miscellaneous Tariff Bills, MTB, to provide relief for products that aren't made in the U.S. But both programs expired at the end of 2020.

Since then, the outdoor industry has paid over \$2 billion in duties that were not accounted for when sourcing decisions were made years ago. Eagle Creek alone has paid over \$4 million in additional tariffs since 2020. If we had that \$4 million back, we would be in a much better position to weather this current trade storm.

This is not just a matter of cost—it's about predictability in our businesses. Our production cycles last summer between 12 and 24 months, and so right now we're in the process of planning our spring 27 season. So, if you think about that, it takes a long time to change suppliers, to shift operations. You need a lot of capital to make that happen, and you need certainty to make that happen. We can't adapt overnight to rapidly changing policy.

So let me be clear, U.S. importers pay the taxes on tariffs. Those taxes are not paid by foreign countries. They're paid by small businesses like ours. And with many businesses still recovering from COVID-era disruptions, we simply did not have the financial cushion to absorb these shocks.

So, what are our options? We can go to our supply chain partners and ask for discounts, which we've done. Generally, if you could get a 10 percent discount out of a factory, you'd be feeling really great about that. At the end of the day, that makes a very small dent in the incremental tariff bills that we're dealing with.

Our other option is to increase prices to our consumers, which if anybody's studied economics, when you raise prices, demand goes down traditionally. And so, it becomes this vicious cycle and it's not ultimately a sustainable path forward for anyone in this industry.

So, I'm here today to ask for leadership. Small businesses like mine cannot fix this alone. We need long-term stable trade policies that recognize the realities of modern supply chains, not punitive tariffs, and uncertainties. We need programs like GSP and MTB restored, to give businesses like ours the tools to survive and grow.

The outdoor industry stands ready to work with the committee, with the Senate, Congress. Our company is prepared to be part of the solution. But let me be very clear, what's happening right now is not working. And thank you for your time. Appreciate the time and happy to answer any questions when the time comes.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Campbell follows.]

Testimony of Travis Campbell, Owner & CEO, Eagle Creek  
May 30, 2025 Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship Hearing

**Beyond the Trailhead: Supporting Outdoor Recreation in an Uncertain Economy**

Chair Ernst, Senator Hickenlooper, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the impacts of current trade and tariff policy on the outdoor recreation economy. My name is Travis Campbell, and I am the owner and CEO of Eagle Creek, a 50-year old small business based in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. We design and sell adventure travel gear around the world.

We are the kind of small business America should be proud of: We pay our taxes. We comply fully with our duties and regulations. We strive to be a responsible employer, a committed partner to our customers, and a steward of the planet. Yet, in the wake of newly announced tariffs, it feels as though our country is systematically working against businesses like ours – raising our costs dramatically while fueling consumer anxiety that suppresses demand.

Eagle Creek – and the vast majority of the \$1.2T outdoor industry, which is responsible for over 5 million American jobs – depends on a complex global supply chain to manufacture the highly technical products we sell. These goods require years of skill and specialization to produce, and those capabilities do not exist in the U.S. at scale. Building that capacity domestically would take years, if it were even possible to do.

When the new reciprocal tariffs were announced on April 2, we had about \$1.8 million in outstanding purchase orders placed with our factories and due to ship within the next four months. Normally, we would expect to pay around \$260,000 in duties that are already priced into our business model. But with the new tariffs, we faced an additional \$580,000 in unexpected costs. That kind of shock is simply unsustainable for a business of our size.

In our 50th year of operations, we could be put out of business by our country's ill-planned trade policies.

Eagle Creek has taken dramatic steps to stay afloat. We froze salary increases that had just been implemented. We halted the hiring of two exceptional candidates. We cut spending across the board – on vendors, on travel, and on investments in growth. And we've revised our sales forecast significantly downward. In short: lower wages, fewer jobs, and less spending in the economy.

The current pause in tariff implementation gives us some breathing room, but only barely. We are still paying 57% more in tariffs today than when this trade war began. The uncertainty and instability continue to wreak havoc on our business, and our people, as we plan and re-plan our outlook beyond July 9<sup>th</sup>.

It's important to understand that outdoor products are not interchangeable with general consumer goods. These are technical, complex items built to withstand extreme conditions and

Testimony of Travis Campbell, Owner & CEO, Eagle Creek  
May 30, 2025 Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship Hearing

there is very little US manufacturing supporting our industry. Yet technical outdoor goods are among the most heavily taxed imports. The trade-weighted duty average for outdoor gear is over 14%, compared to just 2.7% for other consumer goods. Products like waterproof backpacks and footwear are especially hard hit.

Historically, the outdoor industry has had bipartisan, Congressionally-approved tools like the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and the Miscellaneous Tariff Bill (MTB) to provide relief for products that aren't made in the U.S. But both programs expired at the end of 2020. Since then, the outdoor industry has paid over \$2 billion in duties that were not accounted for when sourcing decisions were made years ago. Eagle Creek alone has paid over \$4 million in additional duties since GSP expired. If we had that \$4 million back, we would be in a much better position to weather this current trade storm.

This is not just a matter of cost – it's about predictability. Our production cycles span 12 to 24 months. Right now, we're planning for the Spring 2027 retail season. Changing suppliers or shifting operations requires lead time, capital, and careful planning. We cannot adapt overnight to rapidly shifting policy.

Let me be clear: U.S. importers, not foreign manufacturers, are the ones paying these tariffs. And with many businesses still recovering from COVID-era disruptions, we simply do not have the financial cushion to absorb these shocks.

So, what are our options? We can try to renegotiate costs with our suppliers – but even a 10% discount, which would be extraordinary in normal times, barely dents our new tariff burden. Or we can raise prices and pass the cost onto consumers, which will reduce demand, hurt our customers, and ultimately harm our bottom line.

This is not a sustainable path forward.

I am here today to ask for your leadership. Small businesses like mine cannot fix this alone. We need long-term, stable trade policies that recognize the realities of modern supply chains – not punitive tariffs and uncertainty. And we need programs like GSP and MTB restored to give businesses like ours the tools to survive and grow.

The outdoor industry stands ready to work with you. Our company is prepared to be part of the solution, but we need a clear plan. Because what we're doing now isn't working.

Thank you for your time. I welcome your questions and the opportunity to share additional details.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Great. I appreciate that, and thank you. You summed it up pretty nicely. Now we'll hear from Mike Mojica. Your five minutes begins.

**STATEMENT OF MR. MIKE MOJICA, FOUNDER, OUTDOOR  
ELEMENT, ENGLEWOOD, COLORADO**

Mr. MOJICA. Senator Hickenlooper and distinguished guest and friends and family, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today.

Again, my name's Mike Mojica. I was born on an Army base in Nurnberg, Germany where I saw my father salute, all shades of skin and all shades of skin salute him back. And that imagery has always stuck with me my entire life. It taught me what this great country is all about unity, opportunity, and the confidence to chase dreams with grit and courage. This country, while not perfect, has long inspired dreamers and doers, and I consider myself one of them.

By education, I'm a mechanical engineer, as you mentioned. For years, I had the honor of designing for the U.S. Army and the Air Force. In 2012, I had the opportunity of moving to Colorado, where I rediscovered the outdoors, and I started something on the side; Outdoor Element. My native name is Bodaway, which means fire maker. And that sparked turned into a mission-creating rugged, innovative gear that helps people explore with confidence themed around fire.

About seven and a half years ago I left my stable job in aerospace to go all in with Outdoor Element. I've gone through accelerator programs with Moosejaw and REI. I've secured 10 patents, I have a few pending, and we just came off our best year ever. And then a couple of months ago happened. Overnight tariffs on our core products jumped to 145 percent. That's not a misstatement. What felt like a mood swing for my commander-in-chief now feels like a knife in the back.

What I thought was an approachable path to the American dream has suddenly turned into quicksand. We are now down to 30 percent additional tariffs, 10 for reciprocal and 20 for fentanyl—fentanyl, I'm paying the price for a crime I did not commit. I'm just here in my quicksand drowning a little slower.

We had to pause production, tell our factories to simply hold the goods and not ship them. And what I am shipping is to fulfill wholesale pre-orders. I'm doing little or no profit. I'm doing it to keep relationships alive. I've lost a wholesale account, a key wholesale account right now, because we had slightly increased our prices.

I had to lay off some team members. I've asked others to work less hours. My wife now works for free, indefinitely. My kids who are here today, they help me pack out orders. And I don't mean this to be a pity party or pity story. I'm here not to scream or yell. In fact, my spiritual mentor said, "Anger, never persuades. Hostility builds no one and contention never leads to inspired solutions." So, I'm here for a plea of conversation of clarity. Let's come together. Let's be inspired.

I understand that we operate in a global economy. It's complex, but small businesses like mine cannot plan for success when the

rules change overnight, again and again without warning, without clear strategy or line of communication.

This country's supposed to build and promote small businesses and not crush them. I'm not asking for a handout; I'm asking for a plan. I'm asking for transparency that inspires confidence. Chairman Mike Crapo recently said, "Trade is supposed to provide businesses with the certainty we need to make long-term investments to drive growth." And I couldn't agree more. Today, that certainty it's missing. I'm no longer thriving. I'm working on surviving.

In the past, I've tried to reach out to leadership at USTR doing the 301 punitive tariffs, and it just fell in deaf ears. I'd welcome a conversation from Ambassador Jamieson Greer. Let's forge a path that's smarter together. One that doesn't treat small businesses as collateral damage, but rather invites the small businesses as an important part of the economic equation, part of the economic solution.

Ambassador Greer also said recently that he wants what's best for America. My question is, what part of America? Do I need to be building microchips or being in the auto industry to matter? The acts of my government indicate that I currently don't matter.

Right now, my food, my fuel, shelter, cost a little bit more. Profit margin has gone down and that's just not sustainable. Not for me, not for hundreds of other outdoor small brands facing the same uncertainty.

Now, I've begun to shift production outside of China, and where we can we proudly build here in the U.S., like our newest fire-starting product, Fiber Light. But that's a journey, not a switch, that anyone can just flip on.

And I also believe this, that international commerce promotes peace. It's not a new idea. In the 18 hundreds French economist Frédéric Bastiat, he said this, "If goods don't cross borders, soldiers will." Phil Knight echoed this same idea in his memoir saying that Nike would rather build boots in Vietnam than see combat boots there. And I agree. So, for every international purchase order that we place, that's my vote for peace and partnership, not conflict. Collaboration over conflict is where I stand. So, let's use our forum policy to foster a bridge that we've spent decades building.

Outdoor Element was born from a spark—literally. We designed survival and adventure gear themed around fire that helps people explore the great outdoors with confidence. But behind every piece of gear are real people, families, teams, communities, friends.

If you are a believer in our gear, thank you. If you light fires on cold nights with our firebiners or a scout feather knife or simply believe in small business, you are part of my equation, you are part of my story. So, thank you for that.

To this committee, please don't forget or undermine small scrappy companies who form the backbone of America. Let's build our futures one spark at a time and keep the fire going. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mojica follows.]

Written Testimony of Michael Mojica  
 Founder & CEO, Outdoor Element, LLC

outdoor element  
 10949 E. Peakview Avenue, Unit D6  
 Englewood, CO 80111

Field Hearing: "Beyond the Trailhead: Supporting Outdoor Recreation in an Uncertain Economy"  
 U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship  
 May 30, 2025 | History Colorado Center | Denver, Colorado

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Senator Hickenlooper and distinguished guests—thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Mike Mojica. I was born on a U.S. Army base in Nurnberg, Germany, where I watched my father—a man of integrity and respect—salute every shade of skin, and every shade salute him back. That image has stuck with me my entire life. It taught me what this great country could represent: unity, opportunity, and the confidence to chase dreams with grit and courage. This country, while not without flaws, has long inspired dreamers and doers. I count myself as one of them.

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Overnight, tariffs on our core products jumped to 145%. That's not a misstatement. What felt like a mood swing from my commander-in-chief now feels like a knife in my back. What I thought was an approachable path to the American Dream has suddenly turned into quicksand.

We are now down to 30% additional tariffs, 10 for reciprocal and 20 for fentanyl – Fentanyl, I'm taking the punishment for a crime I didn't commit. So here I am in this quicksand ...just drowning a little slower.

We've had to pause production. Tell our factories to simply hold goods and not ship in some cases; what I am shipping is to fulfill wholesale pre-orders. But I am doing that to keep relationships alive at little or no profitability. I've already lost one key wholesale account because of a slight price increase. I laid off team members. Asked others to work less hours, my wife now works without pay. My kids—who are here with me today—are helping pack orders. This isn't a pity story. And I'm not here to scream or yell. In fact, my spiritual mentor said, "Anger never persuades. Hostility builds no one. Contention never leads to inspired solutions." This is a plea for conversation of clarity. Let's come together. Let's be inspired!

I understand we operate in a global economy. It's complex. But small businesses like mine can't plan for success when the rules change overnight, again and again without warning -without a clear strategy or line of communication. This country is supposed to promote and build businesses, not crush them. I'm not asking for a handout, I'm asking for a plan. I'm asking for transparency that

**Written Testimony of Michael Mojica**  
**Founder & CEO, Outdoor Element, LLC**

**outdoor element**  
**10949 E. Peakview Avenue, Unit D6**  
**Englewood, CO 80111**

inspires confidence. Chairman Mike Crapo recently said, “*Trade is supposed to provide businesses with the certainty we need to make long-term investments to drive growth.*” I couldn’t agree more. Today, that certainty is missing. I am no longer thriving, I’m working on surviving.

In the past, I’ve tried to reach out to leadership with the USTR, during the 301 tariff battles. It fell on deaf ears. I’d welcome a conversation with Ambassador Jamieson Greer – lets’ forge a smarter path forward, one that doesn’t treat small businesses as collateral damage but rather invites small business as an important part of the economic equation...as part of the economic solution.

Ambassador Greer recently said he “wants what’s best for America.” My question is: What part of America? Do I need to be building microchips or be in the auto-industry to matter? It currently feels like I do not matter.

Right now, my food, fuel, and shelter cost more—and my profit margin is shrinking. That’s not sustainable. Not for me. Not for hundreds of other small outdoor brands facing the same uncertainty.

We’ve begun shifting production out of China. And when we can, we proudly manufacture right here in the U.S.—like with our newest fire-starting product, Fiber Light. But that’s a journey, not a switch anyone can flip on overnight. But, I also believe this: international commerce promotes peace. It’s not a new idea, in the 1800’s French economist Frédéric Bastiat once said, “*If goods don’t cross borders, soldiers will.*” Phil Knight echoed this idea in his memoir, saying Nike would rather build boots in Vietnam than see combat boots there. I agree. And every international purchase order we place is my vote for peace and partnership, not conflict. Collaboration over conflict is where I stand.

Let’s use our foreign policy to foster the bridge we’ve spent decades building.

Outdoor Element was born from a spark—literally. We design survival and adventure gear themed around fire that helps people explore the great outdoors with confidence. And behind every piece of gear are real people. Families. Teams. Communities.

To those of you who carry our gears in your packs, light fires on cold nights with our firebiners or a scout feather knife or simply believe in small business—thank you. You’re part of our story.

To this committee: please don’t forget or undermine small, scrappy companies who form the backbone of America -building futures one spark at a time. Let’s keep the fire going.

Thank you.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Well said, well said. Mr. Bush, you're up.

**STATEMENT OF MR. TRENT BUSH, FOUNDER AND CO-CEO,  
ARTILECT STUDIO, BOULDER, COLORADO**

Mr. BUSH. Great. Thank you, Senator Hickenlooper. My name is Trent Bush, and my life has revolved around Colorado outdoor industry since my childhood. Growing up, my dad was one of the first employees at Boulder-based Frostline Kids, which was an innovative outdoor brand that started in the '60s and lasted through the '70s and early '80s.

Frostline enabled countless American families, from diverse economic backgrounds, to enjoy the outdoors affordably, making their jackets, sleeping bags, tents, and packs at home, since back then most American households actually had sewing machines and knew how to use them.

Unfortunately, market conditions dramatically shifted in the early '80s and Frostline, along with other Boulder-based innovators like Holubar, Gerry, and Altra, became obsolete as competitors leveraged overseas manufacturing to deliver finished products, that significantly lower costs with no sewing necessary.

In the mid-80s, I started my own career at Wave Rave, which was a really small snowboard shop in Boulder where I'm from. Although we initially produced our own jackets and pants locally, our limitations started to become apparent when competing brands began to source their products overseas, bringing a new level of quality and performance that we couldn't achieve ourselves.

At Boulder High in 1989, my brother, a friend, and I decided to launch our own brand called Twist. We were determined to produce domestically at that time because even though it was harder, that's what we believed in, and that's what we knew from my prior generation. We soon outgrew Colorado's limited capabilities and moved to the Bay Area aiming to utilize factories abandoned by large American outdoor brands that were already offshoring at that time.

At just a few million dollars in sales, Twist lacked the scale to sustain these factories, and they quickly shuttered, forcing us to try to move our goods to Los Angeles factories, which were more accustomed to producing Halloween costumes and denim jeans, rather than technical outerwear.

Without the necessary specialized equipment or solar sewers available, our products faced severe quality issues. The waterproof coating failed on our U.S. sourced fabrics, snaps fell off, the seams leaked, and even back then, the know-how had already moved on. Ultimately, survival forced us to move our manufacturing overseas, but it was too little, too late, and we ended up pretty much losing everything at that point. And that was way back in the nineties. US-Based performance apparel manufacturing capabilities have only really decreased since that time. Definitely not increased.

I know this is true because after Twist, the past 30 years of my career have evolved around senior roles and design and development, for global performance brands, as mentioned, like Burton Spyder, Oakley, Outdoor Research, Mountain Hardware, Black Diamond Equipment, and my most recent startup, ARTILECT.

At each of these brands, we actually did make sincere efforts and attempts to reshore partial production, but most of those have actually ended in costly failures with only basic products like t-shirts, socks, those kinds of things being successful.

Today at ARTILECT, we create innovative high performance merino wool apparel in Vietnam, because domestic production remains impossible due to the lack of merino sheep, specialized yarns equipment and infrastructure.

And because of those reasons, and even with the interest of U.S. military, we can't comply with the Berry Amendment because the necessary domestic supply chain simply doesn't exist, and it leaves our brand without a valuable business opportunity, and it actually leaves our military with substandard equipment.

While the post COVID outdoor market has already been harder than any that I've ever faced in my entire career, our entire industry faces new unprecedented crisis, amplified by recent U.S. tariff policies. For a small wholesale-focused business like ours, these tariffs dramatically inflate landed product costs, forcing us to either to raise retail prices or accept significantly diminished margins, or most likely both.

Our retail partners can't absorb these price increases without reducing their orders significantly, and their customers are unable to pay more, endangering both their own businesses and ours at the same time.

Additionally, these tariffs severely undermine ongoing industry efforts towards greater equity and inclusion, making outdoor participation much more expensive and illusive.

Even if Tuesday's ruling against the tariff stands, the uncertainty of U.S. trade policies have also sparked anti-American sentiment in our foreign markets, causing outright rejection of American brands, and severely damaging our global competitiveness.

This is all super hard for me personally. I held onto producing in the U.S. as long as I possibly could, and I feel I've done everything I was asked to do since, including moving production out of China six years ago. Now, even those staggeringly high tariffs outside China may force my business to close. This just isn't the American dream I believed in, and I've tried so hard over all those years to achieve. The rules keep changing and we just can't keep up.

So, I respectfully urge Congress to reconsider these policies that cripple small outdoor businesses like mine, recognizing the unintended damage they're causing. Thank you sincerely for your time, consideration, and thoughtful understanding. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bush follows.]

**Written Testimony of Trent Bush**  
**Founder & Co-CEO, ARTILECT**



Field Hearing: “Beyond the Trailhead: Supporting Outdoor Recreation in an Uncertain Economy”  
 U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship  
 May 30, 2025 | History Colorado Center | Denver, Colorado

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Thank you Senator Hickenlooper and distinguished guests-

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That was way back in the 90’s, and US-based performance apparel manufacturing capabilities have only decreased from there.

I know this is true, because after Twist, the past 30 years of my career have revolved around senior roles in design and development for global performance brands like Burton, Spyder, Oakley, Outdoor Research, Mountain Hardwear, Black Diamond Equipment, and my recent startup, ARTILECT. At each of these brands, we made sincere attempts to reshore partial production, but those have ended in costly failures, with only basic products like t-shirts and socks being successful.

**Written Testimony of Trent Bush**  
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I respectfully urge Congress to reconsider these policies that cripple small outdoor businesses like mine, recognizing the unintended damage they're causing. Thank you sincerely for your time, consideration, and thoughtful understanding.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Trent Bush".

Trent Bush  
ARTILECT

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you, all three of you. I think those are so distinct and yet compelling and some of the calculus you have to use, and no matter how good you are at your business, if you have to raise your prices three or 4 percent, that doesn't mean you're going to lose three or 4 percent of sales. You don't know what you're going to lose, at what point that people feel they can't afford what you're selling. And you can raise your prices 3 percent and lose 10 percent of your sales. And I think I heard variations of that through each of you.

I'm going to go back up and forth and ask a bunch of questions. I'll start with you Trent, just because you spoke last. You've obviously had quite a career across a number of apparel brands. You've obviously been diligently working towards American Made in every way you could. And I think as you said, we share that desire to get all America, but there's no switch that you can flip. It really is a journey, as one of you said.

You said there's a lack of merino wool supply, is one thing in terms of necessary machinery available. Maybe go a little further in detail, the infrastructure, labor, technology, if you want to bring all of your manufacturing state side. I mean, you can summarize it. You don't go through too much of the details. If you ask a true entrepreneur a question like this, you could be here for an hour. But what would that do? Just kind of run through that. What would that do to the cost for your consumer?

Mr. BUSH. Well, first of all, it wouldn't be possible even if I wanted to. Okay. The Merino sheep in meaningful quantities only grow in the Merino band, which is Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina. There's a certain latitude where Merino can be raised in meaningful numbers.

Machinery wise, and we were actually joking, sort of in the green room before, that there's only one in Denver as far as I know. There's only one Ralph sewing machine. I don't know if they're still even here, but there's one place you can actually buy sewing machines, industrial sewing machines.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. That's for the whole region?

Mr. BUSH. That's for the whole region, kind of for the mountain west. And they're the only people that can actually even service them. And it's not just about, you know, having people who know what they're doing, people who know how to sew, and people who know how to sew at a very high level. To be efficient, it means having the machinery, it means having the trajectory of innovation in the machinery side. That again, all that left the U.S. decades ago.

And so, you know, not to go into every little detail, it actually isn't possible. And that's kind of what I mentioned with the military thing. We were working with the U.S. 10 special forces and they really liked our product and that kind of thing, but we can't be very compliant. And our technology, especially with the yarns that we use, a process called New Yarn, those machines do not exist in the U.S. to even make the yarns. So even if we had the rest of them, the machines don't exist here. So, it's a losing equation.

I think the last thing I would say is, we can do a much better job as a business, when you talk two or 3 percent raise, we're talking 20 or 30 percent raise in most cases, from a cost perspective.

And that's all money that we'd literally pay to nobody, right? Or to our government, right?

I would rather spend every one of those dollars on a high paying job here in the U.S., because all of those dollars will go to marketing, they'll go to sales, they'll go to distribution, all the things that we need to support, instead of paying a low wage, so sewing job, I think that's a much better way to spend those dollars, right?

Senator HICKENLOOPER. And that 10 or 20 percent largely at least in this situation, is going to go—some chunk of it will go to tax breaks for very, very wealthy people, many of whom don't want the tax breaks. That's the one thing that never really comes out. I've talked to a dozen, or maybe not quite a dozen, but very wealthy people in Colorado and asked them about these budgets in the tax cut. Most of them go, you know, you're really wealthy, a couple hundred thousand dollars, which sounds enormous to the rest of us. They're like, no, not if that's going to hurt people like yourselves.

Mr. Mojica, I understand exactly what, as you were describing that small business anxiety and challenge to juggle all the problems. And one thing I remember vividly was when you have something inserted into your world that demands a certain amount of your attention, everything else gets diminished. In other words, you're not doing everything else that you are accustomed to doing in order to grow and thrive.

So as is, tariffs have rendered your business uncertain in the short term. How have you found, or have you been able to find enough time, to do the growth and to thrive as you want? How much of your time, I guess as a percentage is what I'm asking, are you having put towards navigating this intrusion that the tariffs are creating for your business?

Mr. MOJICA. Great question. I don't know if I can give you exact percentage, but I know that there's been lots of sleepless nights and just staying in the office wondering like, how am I going to make the ends meet? Gratefully, I have an awesome support family that comes in and starts packing packages and learning different parts of the business. I didn't know I needed to be a tariff expert when I started this business. [Laughter.]

But it's definitely something we learned to navigate. I'll say that all of us here, I think we, the beauty of America is we get to choose our own hard, right? And it's like working an eight to five is hard. But I chose this hard, and I'm willing to accept the obstacles that comes with it. Now, I feel like this is kind of a curve ball that I didn't expect to see, and so I'm trying to learn how to navigate.

I'm a part of a couple of entrepreneurial support networking groups, and I found that it's like reaching out and sometimes we share each other's pity party just to get it off our chest. Like, okay, it's time to move on. But it's been a struggle, the struggles are real. If I had to guess, probably 30 percent of my time is just trying to understand, reading articles about like, what could happen next, what's the ramification?

I was reaching out to a broker yesterday, trying to figure out what the taxes or the tariffs are. I have something coming in right now and I'm like, hey, what am I paying? I don't know. You know, like, what does this mean? And so, it's the uncertainty. It's hard

to create a business plan around when you have a big ball of uncertainty. And that's what's driving me crazy. That's why I want a plan that, just inspires like, we have something stable, let's move forward. And what I don't see is anything stable. It's a disaster.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Yes. Well, and that's, so much of small business is based on assumptions. And you've got to have a fairly good set of assumptions to make sure that the things you don't know, like, what are my sales going to be, is there going to be some weather event or something that's going to come out of the blue? But when almost everything is up in the air, that I think you all three of you talked to that that point.

Mr. Campbell, I want to switch gears for just a minute. Obviously, there's so many threats that are facing the outdoor recreation industry right now. We're seeing drastic cuts to pretty much every federal enterprise that manages our public lands. And these are large unsustainable cuts. I don't think you can argue that.

And whether you're talking about national parks or national forests and all those recreational opportunities, this transition away from responsibility that the federal government has historically always exhibited around our public lands, I see as a genuine threat.

They're even talking about taking some of our smaller national parks and turning them over to states, without a plan, without any guidelines or accountability. Obviously, they've fired or forced out thousands of employees from, not just the National Park Service in our parks, and they're all going to be down 10, 20 percent. Who knows what the bathroom conditions will be. Although I think everyone should still go to our National Parks. You need that time and a beautiful place to get restored these days.

But U.S. Forest Service, the campgrounds, the fish, and wildlife, I mean, how we take care of our habitats in the original budget bill that was taken out, but there was a part of that bill that was going to sell off over 500,000 acres of public lands mostly in Nevada but also in Utah.

And that should be sobering, because once you begin that process, you've taken an absolutely in violent line that we've never crossed, of selling off, letting the executive branch sell off public lands. And suddenly that line no longer exists and is blurred.

So, I want to—because your business really does directly bear on this, but also your business and the industry as a whole. How dependent are you on safe, accessible, protected public lands?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yeah, I mean, I would say wholly dependent. You know, as the outdoor industry, I can't speak for everyone, but we think of public lands as the core infrastructure of our business, in the same way that like, machines might be the infrastructure of a steel manufacturer, public lands are the infrastructure of the outdoor industry.

And so, you know, from my lens, outdoor industry has been growing, thriving for years. The demands on our public lands have been increasing. We actually have way more demand than we have supply today of public lands. So, to me, it's actually sort of antithetical, right? We should be buying more public lands because there's the demand to justify that as a country. And frankly, more public lands or better maintained public lands, either of those would be an investment in the health of this industry.

And I already said in my testimony, \$1.2 trillion of economic activity for the country, 500 million U.S. jobs, like you know, I'm a business person. If I see that kind of growth and opportunity in energy, I want to invest behind that, not tear it down and sell it off.

And so, there's no question that even the conversation about diminished staffing in the parks or BLM campgrounds being closed, are going to decrease demand. You know, a big part of our international tourism, bringing it back to my business which is dependent on travel, and global travel, like lots of people come from outside the U.S. specifically to visit our national parks and our public spaces.

And the quality of the experience they have in doing that directly relates to whether people are going to come the next time and how much money they're going to spend while they're here. And so, from my lens again, very much shooting ourselves in the foot in terms of economic activity.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Yeah, I'm sure each would've a version of that same response. Mr. Bush, I'll come back to you, Trent. I call him Mr. Bush or Trent. I go back and forth, Trent Mike, you go whatever. Trent, everyone in this room knows that the benefits in outdoor recreation go far beyond just the immediate activity that you're engaged in and beyond just the economic measure—of economic impact.

You know, when I first did my first summer field work, when I was getting my master's in geology, studied volcanic rocks north of Yellowstone Park. So, I went out for a whole summer, two years in a row. And that first summer I would go out for 10 days at a time and then come back in and go to a place called Chico Hot Springs and have a great meal. And then I would go and take a shower, meal first.

When I came back to where I was in school in Connecticut, a little small school there and my father had died when I had just turned eight. And it was my mother's second husband who passed away, so no one really talked about my dad. But the one thing that was good about all that, it was a dark period, but we didn't have to go to Sunday school. We didn't have to go to church.

And it's funny, I came back from that first summer in the high of—in the Beartooth wilderness. And without even thinking, I started going to church. And I think that's something that we don't often, or don't always consider, is that the other benefits of being outside and into wilderness are profound.

And it improves public health, obviously hiking, the exercise, climbing, but also combats loneliness. It diminishes anxiety, reduces stress. Many parts of Europe now, doctors prescribe an hour, you know, three times a week, taking a walk in the woods. In many cases though, the cost of the gear even for basic access is a barrier.

And so, you brought up Travis, Trent, sorry, the TRs, those who were dyslexic did not set up this line. [Laughter.]

Trent, you brought this, the tariffs are causing economic uncertainty, but it's also rising costs, I think undermine our efforts to create more access. And again, there's a price point for everything. And if we really believe this is a public health situation, that becomes a valuable equation.

So, Trent, can you speak a little bit about the benefits of getting more folks outside from the industry perspective, and how these costs could affect more people getting access to the outdoors?

Mr. BUSH. Yeah, I mean, there's a lot there. You know, I think just to pull it all the way back to the most important benefits of being outside, there's probably no real—it's hard to look at a graph maybe of the rise of our mental health crisis in the U.S. and things like phones, right? The more people have been on social media doing whatever, the less that they're out in the outdoors. And I think that that is something—I think those are totally hand in hand.

Being in the outdoors resets you, it resets everybody I've ever met. We have in my family alone, we have struggles with anxiety and depression and things like that. And the times that those are not as apparent as maybe they would be otherwise, are when we're outside. I mean, anybody that tries to go skiing or snowboarding, something like that in Colorado, it's already prohibitively expensive for a huge part of the population.

These policies have not made that less expensive or made access easier. You talked about selling off public lands, that's less of a place for us to be, to reset our clocks and reset ourselves and, you know, maybe not go to church, but that could be a church for a lot of us. So, you know, you can't even put a measure on how important that access is to the health and welfare of people and all of these, everything that we're doing right now is totally antithesis of that happening.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Right. I agree.

Mr. MOJICA. May I add to that?

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Sure.

Mr. MOJICA. This is part of my origin story here. [Laughter.]

Me discovering the outdoors again. So, I'm a Texas defect, you know, hopefully you're okay with that, guys. God bless Texas. But I discovered Colorado and just amazing things happened. So, the year I started Outdoor Element, I had moved up to Aurora area and my neighbor's like, hey, Mike, you want to go hike a fourteener? And I was like, yes, let's do it. And then I said, what's a fourteener? Right? I had no idea what that meant. And he explained the altitude thing. And we did Mount Yale.

And we did hike mount Yale and two things happened to me on that hike. One, I met a young lady, she was hiking down. She went up for a Sunrise summit and she was coming down, I was coming up, we just passed tree line, and she was like, all hobbling. And I was the weird guy that got right in front of her room, like, hey, what's wrong with you? What's wrong with you? And she's like, I rolled my ankle, obviously, you know, get out of my way. And I know. So, I sat her down and I had first aid kit and took off her boot, and I wrapped her up and sent her on her way.

And then when I got to the top, I was with like three other guys. And I'm small, but I feel like I'm a strong dude. I'm a man, right? I got to the top and I'm like, why do I want to cry right now? And like, I had my little Moses moment, if you will. And I'm just like, I'm going to look over here guys because I can't hold my emotions together. And it was just like, it was this beautiful, peaceful, revelatory moment in my life.

And I came down with two lessons. It was like, hey, let's be prepared. I feel like fire is a lifesaver, so I built it around my native name Bodaway. And then let's get outdoors more. Let's get in touch with these beautiful moments in life that we just have the landscape for here in Colorado, but this can happen anywhere.

In addition, one of my kids suffered from anxiety as well, and we went through therapy, and then we discovered the Tetons. We went camping for nine days and just throwing rocks in a lake like cured my daughter. It was just like this beautiful thing. So, you're right, it's unmeasurable. Like we need the outdoors. Like, don't take this away from us.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Right? Well put, well put. Mr. Campbell, you, or Travis. You mentioned having to freeze salary increases and pull them back. You were going to hire two people, cut spending every way you could to try and make up for the tariff expenditures. I thought the part also, when you're doing that, at the same time, you're revising your forecast down. You know, when your numbers are down across the board, that's the hardest, I think.

Are there other long-term implications, let's just specifically talk about staffing. Are you losing or potentially going to lose long-term employees that in many ways become irreplaceable?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yes. My hope is that we don't lose any more employees fundamentally, that we find a way to navigate our way through this in a way that doesn't cost more roles for us.

You know, you had mentioned long tail consequences from this disruption, somewhere along the way. And I think there's lots of long tail consequences to this, like lots of the damage, even if we like, snap our fingers and tariffs go back to their normal levels you know, at some level we've scared the global consumer. We've already at some level damaged our businesses through just like this level of disruption.

Like a good example is we've paused some of the product introductions that we were planning to do over the next six to 12 months, because just for a variety of reasons that didn't make sense to bring in the inventory and have the risk. And so, you know, again, if we snapped our fingers in this resolve today, our business will actually deal with the implications of this for probably 18 more months at a minimum.

And our industry is built on innovation. People like Mike who have these amazing ideas for the next great product. And same with Trent, right? Like, building this incredible product that we want to be bringing to market. And these are complex, long timeline things, like I said earlier. And so, there's going to be an implication to that innovation pipeline because people have frozen those investment choices.

And so, whether it ends up costing our businesses more people, it probably will. We're sort of, I think in our business, destined to have a bad sales year, there's not much that we can do to change that at this point. It's really about how do we plan for the next year and the next year and try and make sure that we get out of this cycle as quickly as we can.

But I think it gets lost in a lot of this, right? Because we're so focused on right in front of our faces right now because the tariffs are so immediate. I think that long tail impact for it's going to rip-

ple out for a long period of time. So, the faster that we can resolve this, the better we can move through.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Yes. Mike, let me come back to you and then I'll have a question for all of you. We'll work towards this. Mike, you've talked a lot about, you've been part of trying to be the solution. You reached out to officials; you're trying to collaborate, which will get you into trouble, that's how I first got into the government. [Laughter.]

And I think your willingness to share your experiences and to collaborate is really important. Phasing out manufacturing in China, manufacturing domestically wherever as much as possible. But again, you've had to shift from thriving to surviving.

What would you suggest to Congress? And you actually all can chime in on this. What would you suggest that Congress and the Administration could do to ensure the small businesses aren't left behind in these discussions? Small businesses of all stripes? Right now, we're just talking about outdoor recreation, but I think we're probably at that point where we need to start thinking about a structural process or solution that we can say, all right, this isn't going to solve it tomorrow, but this is something down the road. What's your response to that?

Mr. MOJICA. I think we're doing it right now, by you inviting us to the table and having an open conversation is, I think, critical to find a good solution. To feel like I have a voice, to feel like I'm heard, is for me it's volumes.

Now love for—see some policy change. And I know it's a complex system, you know, I'm hoping, why couldn't there be a threshold for exclusions for either top line or number of employees, or if you're doing something for the environment. Like we work with a lot of recycled materials and we're trying to single use plastics from our packaging. There's like all these little things that are like, hey, this could be a viable solution. I have these ideas; I want to share them with someone. And just, you know, Katherine Tai never answered her messages and, you know, and so I'm just like, who can I speak to?

So, I was more than excited to get a phone call. I think Connor Hall's the one who texted me and said, hey, let's have a conversation and then got me on this panel. So, thank you, sir. But I think the biggest thing is like, let's, make it real, let's turn this, not companies, as like a dollar sign, but as people, like who hire employees who often use family as employees. And if we're going to be the collateral damage because of that, I think it changes the equation when you see us as people and not just as a transaction, right? Well, this needs to be a relationship.

I feel like Stephen, I think is—"It's like everything happens at the speed of relationships." Like have a relationship with small business, call us up. Like we want to be heard. I don't know who to call. I'll email, text, and tweet or whatever. And it's like, it just falls on deaf ears. But having this moment, I feel like is a sign of progress, in my opinion.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Right?

Mr. BUSH. Yes. I mean, I would just say maybe this is a—do your research before you act. Because if the goal, or one of the goals that I've heard of sort of all this tariff thing was to bring manufacturing

back to the U.S. Make sure that it can happen before you make it impossible for anything to happen for us.

I could have told you, obviously if somebody would've called, told them that there is nowhere to make those products. You were talking about, trying to make a dog leash, your daughter. Locally, you can't even make something that simple here right now. So do the research before you kind of turn off our lifelines, I would say.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Yes.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Those are great answers. I mean, I think I would say something similar to what Mike said. Small businesses are by their nature small and fragmented. And so, it's hard for us to speak as a collective voice. So, scenarios like this are what allow us to somewhat speak with a collective voice. And your committee allows that at some level. And so, you know, we'll never be able to hire lobbyists to be able to get access that the larger companies can pay for. And so, any opportunities like this where we can come together and use our voices and humanize our businesses is just super valuable.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. I'll never take any campaign donations from those large corporations either. Last question. We were in the green room, a couple of you touched on this, but I do think it's interesting that within the tariff conversation there is other international negotiation and drama. And I wanted to ask each of you, because you all have international customers as we talked about.

Have you seen people, and you can say both retail and wholesale customers who are saying, we can't do business with the United States anymore because of whatever. There's I'm sure multiple, you don't have to go into details, but is that something that's also part of the challenge and is it one or 2 percent or is it for your business, you know, five to 10 percent or just kind of again, run down on that?

Mr. CAMPBELL. I mean, I can give a quick answer. I couldn't put a percentage on it. We always think from a customer service standpoint, when we hear from one person, there's at least 10 others, right? Like there's a heuristic idea of if somebody takes the time to call or send an email, then there's probably at least 10 more people who feel the same way.

And so, I've gotten a number of emails from our friends up in Canada, who've sent through and basically a note saying, I love your product, I've used it for years and years and years, I'm never buying another one. Sorry. And those are not the emails you like to get. Right.

And so, I don't know how large of a scale that is. I know Canadians in particular have been speaking with their wallet and not traveling to the U.S. and so you know, that in a very small way has a significant impact on our business.

Mr. MOJICA. In my case, I feel like what's happened is I am no longer fostering my international accounts where I should be, because I'm trying to juggle, trying to learn how to deal with the tariffs here. I got an email last week from our Japanese distributor that says, hey, we never got this, your new pricing structure. How does it look for international? I'm like, whoa, that's a great question. So, I admittedly have not done the analysis to update pricing for my international accounts.

Some things will slip through the cracks when you're in survival mode. And I feel like that's where I am, where I need to take a step back and reanalyze and possibly like, get some hired help, some part-time help. Like, hey, let's look at this. I need someone smarter than me to come to the table and be like, how do we orchestrate this, what's the step forward?

So yes, I feel like international accounts right now,—they weren't the bulk of my business. We're talking like 5–8 percent. And because of that, where I wanted the plan was to foster them this year, next year, it's on hold. And so, my growths on hold and so is my R&D deck. Like I've been waiting to like bring more things to the market and I had a few customers say, hey, you showed me this R&D deck, like, when's that coming out? I'm like, well, I put that on pause for a while. So, I don't know yet. So, it's a lot of things are on hold right now.

Mr. BUSH. And we are different than a lot of brands, especially kind of startup and small brands where we take a little bit more of a wholesale approach. I've always really believed retailers have done a great job building their communities, and our job is to support their work with the end consumer. That now has sort of ended up in a situation where we're actually bigger in Europe, in Scandinavia than we are in the U.S.

Mainly European marketplace typically is a little more forward on buying on performance, sustainability, quality, longevity, things like that. U.S. consumers or retailers, hype and price are usually a big driver of a lot of things. because it makes their job much easier to sell the product.

So, we're in a position right now where there's major anti-American sentiment across the European Union, of course. And there are Reddit pages. You can Google all this stuff and really the boycotts on American outdoor brands in particular from a consumer perspective. So, if those really take hold with those bigger retailers we work with because we are focused on retail relationships, then that'll be the end for us because we are so heavily weighted in Europe right now.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. That sucks. Yes, it does. And I'll finish. Just to the quick question. Because as a small business person, we were always looking over our shoulder at the really big companies and whether they were going to come into our market and whether that direct competition—how we would respond, were we ready? And obviously the restaurant business, you always had some big box competition. But you guys all have big competition as well, large companies.

And you know, it's similar, when Congress tried to regulate the large banks after the fiasco, the financial crisis of 2009, 2010, who really got hurt were small banks. Because the really large companies can tolerate these ups and downs and swings of more regulation, they're large enough so they can more easily spend or can accommodate the cost of five or 10 staff members to deal with all this red tape.

I think in the same way, I haven't seen this written around, thought about, but I think it is giving an undue advantage to your large competitors because they've got more space in their budget to deal with a tariff for six months or a year and try and get through

this while the process gets sorted out. Am I thinking about that right? Why don't we go down the line?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yes, you are. And sorry, I was getting ready to—I was so excited to answer. [Laughter.]

I was in DC a couple weeks ago lobbying and speaking with members of Congress. And one of the things that I heard from a few offices was, just wait. This needs a few more months to resolve.

And to get to your point, like most small businesses actually don't have a few months to wait. Because again, we don't have the balance sheet to absorb the losses over that span of time. Whereas the big companies do, to your point.

If I'm a large company and it takes six months for this to resolve, that's fine. You know, the bank will float them through that window or they already have the assets on their balance sheet to get through that window. But most small businesses aren't structured with that level of reserves to hang on, and so it does.

I talk a lot about the second order and third order effects of these choices that we're dealing with, right? The first order effects are pretty obvious, costs go up. But the second and third order effects are exactly what you say, which is like the competitive landscape changes based on capital structure that you may have had or the scale of your business. And so, this does in a strange way, put an advantage on the bigger companies and the smaller companies are disadvantaged.

Mr. MOJICA. I was slightly jealous when I read that, I think it was Apple, shipped six tons of iPhones over, you know? because I was like, wow, what kind of bank account do they have? And it doesn't look like mine. [Laughter.]

And I think the irony too, is like having a conversation about tariffs and international commerce is a good thing. And I think in the end we may end up in a better spot, but how we're getting there is crippling to small business. It is treating us like collateral damage and I feel like a pawn in this game.

And for me I feel like we weren't considered in the conference, like you're saying, like the research isn't there. Like you were mentioning like my kids own a dog business, selling leashes and we were trying to make it stateside and essentially get ghosted by three companies. And so, we were forced to go overseas, and then now I feel like we're penalized for being overseas. And it's just like the game doesn't make sense to me right now. And again, just to your point, I do feel like there's an unfair advantage to the larger companies, right?

Mr. BUSH. Yes. We actually have a joke inside, that the big brands have more daytime janitors than we have employees. [Laughter.]

And it's because it's true. You know? And you see it in the marketplace right now, if you look at some of the big brand moves that have to happen because of these, whether they're using an excuse or whether it's actually true, it's easy to pull levers at scale. You can fire 400 people or lay off 400 people to make up for some of these issues. I can't do that. We're bare bones as it is. So, we just can't do that. You know?

The other thing that from a brand perspective, competing against much bigger brands, we can't just, especially with our sort of

wholesale strategy, we can't just shift more resources to sort of the direct to consumer side, where there's a much bigger margin, where much bigger brands could actually use this as a pivot point to even sort of abandon those retailers further and really take that attention towards building their own consumer base and competing directly against the brands that they sell to them right now.

So, there's a lot of things that are going to happen and I'm interested actually to see where it ends up.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Well, I think in a funny way, and I know a number, I have a good relationship with a number of Republican senators. This is not their intention. They do not intend, to not only put pressure and in many cases, going to drive out of business, small enterprises. And if that business will get swooped up by the big companies, they won't have to spend any money. It'll be, low hanging fruit.

And the injustice of that, I don't think was intended by any Republican senator that I know. And hopefully we can begin moving now that the tariffs have been put on hold and kind of pushed aside. Maybe that becomes the default, that's what's going to be, that 10 percent, no fun. But at least if you knew it was going to be 10 percent going forward, it would be a better world, right? And I think that would give every small business person at least a fighting chance of holding their own against the larger competition and against the international markets as well, which you guys are all competing on.

So, anyway, I'll give to you a last comment if you want. You don't have to just—

Mr. BUSH. I just really appreciate this, thank you very much. These are the types of things that we don't have access to, typically, as just little business owners with a dream. And it's really refreshing to have somebody actually sit across from me and listen and absorb and ask great questions. And I really appreciate it. So, thank you and thank you to the staff for having me and us.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. You bet.

Mr. MOJICA. I echo what Trent said. Thank you so much for this opportunity to hear our voice. For a small business, I never thought I'd be in a Senate hearing. [Laughter.]

So, for me, it's incredible to be heard.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yes. Just to thank you, also appreciate putting a light on this.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. I appreciate all of your efforts. I, again, there's parts of me that listen to this and make me want to leap into it, back into it. Parts of it are, you know, in the back of my head saying, we got to do something. And thank God I don't have to deal with the challenges that you guys are all facing, just because I've been there and I know what it's like.

And you know, sometimes you realize all the different attributes that you as individuals have to have. You know, how did you know when you first started your business, that good parenting was going to help allow your business to get through the tough times? Having kids, being able to step up you know, all of those things, and they always are, but these are unpredictable, I mean, completely unpredictable times and do force us into situations that are

oftentimes impossible. And yet we deal with it as small business people.

But let me make the commitment to you that I will go back, this is all the congressional record. I'm not sure how much good that does, but it does lay it down and the public can get access to it and hear the stories, because I think only through those stories can we convince Congress and the administration to wake up and recognize that we're sustaining losses here. They're needless and they're going to be long lasting, and they affect every aspect of our country.

So, thank you all. I have to do my closing or who knows what legal problems I'll be in. [Laughter.]

Thank you to our panel of witnesses for your experience, your suggestions and certainly the most precious thing for any small business person, your time, to come here. Again, I want to thank chair Ernst, Ranking Member Markey, the truly dedicated committee staff for making this hearing possible. It's obviously they have to schlep out and put all this together on a one-off basis.

I'll reemphasize that this is not the end of the discussion. This is a beginning to our effort to raise the alarm about how these tariffs are hurting our country. I think our sleeves are rolled up; your sleeves are all rolled up. We will dedicate ourselves to creating real practical solutions to some of these issues you're facing, and do a better job of working with the Administration if they'll let us, to create a tariff system that's maybe a little more nuanced, but actually protects one of our most valuable assets, our small businesses.

If other people have questions or if you guys have other things you want to put in the record, we'll keep the record open for a couple weeks. I don't know what that exact date is but it's in there. I should know it off the top of my head. You go over the end of the month or always mix the math hard. Thank you all, really appreciate.

We'll gavel off.

[Whereupon, at 2:22 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

