

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, my name is Rosalba Herrera, and I am the President of the Board of Directors of the Cooperativa Mercado Central in Minneapolis.

I want to thank each of you for the visit you paid us last summer after the uprisings. While we appreciate your visits, the reality is that we need support.

Established 21 years ago, the Cooperativa Mercado Central is home to 33 Latino-owned small businesses. The idea for Mercado Central was born from the need South Minneapolis' Latino community had to reconnect to its culture.

Thanks to a group of visionary micro-entrepreneurs who organized to form a Latino cooperative and offer a space that would serve as a focal point for Latino community, commerce, and culture. From its beginning, Mercado has been an economic hotspot for the community.

In the last 21 years, we have been able to overcome two economic recessions and now a pandemic, but our Mercado needs capital investment. We need your support in order to make improvements to our building with the following repairs:

- Replacement of the ceiling
- Foundation
- Floors
- Parking lot

These are urgent projects to keep meeting our commitments and goals.

The high costs of these projects have made them difficult to achieve. Furthermore, we were affected by the economic recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the civil unrest last year. That is the reason we are asking for your support to carry forth these projects.

Mercado Central is an emblem of the Latino community in Minnesota, and especially in South Minneapolis, and with your support, we will be able to keep it that way.

We thank you for your time and hope you will continue to visit us at Mercado Central. You will always be welcome. Thank you very much.

**I, Stephanie Gil, owner of Puerta Abierta Bilingual Services LLC, ATA Member Number 274195, hereby certify that the above is an exact and accurate translation of the original document to the best of my knowledge, and that I am competent in both English and Spanish to render such translation.**

