Minnesota small business owners say 'Operation Metro Surge' is hurting local businesses and communities

Kevin Brown, Smart Set

Small business owners across Minnesota are experiencing significant economic harm due to Operation Metro Surge and ongoing ICE activity. For many months, owners have reported fewer customers, employees have been afraid to come to work, and there has been a growing sense of fear that is making it harder to run a business and serve their communities.

Since Dec. 6, after the launch of Operation Metro Surge, the situation has grown far more bleak, with both immigrant owned businesses and non immigrant businesses losing employees due to raids in the workplace and homes, and closing their doors. Businesses from restaurants to healthcare centers to construction companies are impacted- having an enormous impact on all sectors of the local economy, disrupting daily life for Minnesotans who need essential services.

In addition, the environment of fear, intimidation, and violence targeting communities of color and the most vulnerable is completely unacceptable. In the wake of the murder of Renee Good, small business owners are stepping up to support their community in this challenging time.

“Small businesses depend on people showing up,” said Main Street Action Executive Director Richard Trent. “Owners need their employees to feel safe coming to work and their customers to feel comfortable walking through the door. Right now, many businesses in Minnesota are seeing fewer customers and struggling to staff shifts because fear has entered everyday life, and their staff have been impacted.”

“We have had to close rooms due to having no staff. I am not going to force people to come to work to be scared all day, because we work with children. This is not safe for anyone. We no longer feel safe going outside or on walks. Nothing about the presence of ICE has made me feel safe at home or at work- it has actually done the exact opposite," said an owner of a childcare facility in Edina, Minn.

A coalition of business organizations, including Longfellow Business Association, Seward Civic and Commerce Association and Main Street Action, is urging elected officials to step in and call on ICE to immediately leave the Twin Cities area.

Kevin Brown, owner of Smart Set, said: “This is not about safety or enforcing immigration laws, it’s a federal occupation of our city. Masked, armed paramilitary groups are smashing car windows and dragging U.S. citizens out of their cars, breaking down doors of houses without warrants, taking parents and leaving small children alone in cars in the middle of winter. It’s not uncommon now to see cars sitting running, in the middle of the street with the door open, where ICE has kidnapped someone. Streets and restaurants are empty, schools and businesses closed, and people are afraid to leave their houses.”

Main Street Action is calling on specific leaders to take responsibility and act:

• Congressman Tom Emmer, Minnesota’s highest-ranking Republican and House Majority Whip, to use his influence to push for an end to Operation Metro Surge and ICE operations in the state.
• Other members of Congress
• State and local Chambers of Commerce to elevate the concerns of their members and communicate directly with federal officials about the harm these actions are causing to local businesses.
• State legislators should listen to business owners in their districts and advocate for policies that allow workers, customers, and employers to participate in the economy without fear.

Main Street Action, which represents tens of thousands of small business owners nationwide and over 1,500 in Minnesota, including many across the Twin Cities metro, knows these impacts are already showing up on Main Streets across the state, according to a press release.

Original Link:
https://www.southwestvoices.news/stories/minnesota-small-business-owners-say-operation-metro-surge-is-hurting-local-businesses-and,145352