



December 4, 2019

Ms. Nydia M. Velazquez  
Committee on Small Business  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2361 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Chairwoman Velazquez, Ranking Member Chabot and Committee Members,

It is our pleasure to provide testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Small Business hearing, "Embracing Corporate Responsibility. Small Business Best Practices." My name is Sandra McElwee and I am the Chief Dream Facilitator for Seanese, a T-shirt company founded by my son, Sean.

My name is Sean McElwee and I'm the President and Chief Creative Officer of Seanese, a T-shirt company I founded in 2017 and based in Southern California. Seanese is a micro-enterprise with profits in the past 2.5 years totaling \$32,000.

I'm on a mission to show the world that people with Down syndrome can have a business and give back.

My mom is going to tell you the rest of the story.

Sean is the creative genius behind the over 130 designs on 12 different styles of shirts available on his website, and I assist him with the accounting and administration of his business. I am a volunteer employee.

Sean is best known for his role on the Emmy-winning television show Born this Way on the A&E network. This unscripted show followed the lives of 7 adults with Down syndrome and created many opportunities for Sean. Because of the show, Sean was invited to deliver keynote speeches and while writing his speech, he had the idea to put his own words onto T-shirts.

I encouraged Sean's entrepreneurial spirit in hopes it can be a solution for long-term meaningful employment. Many people with disabilities find their best option for employment is starting their own business, in fact 1 in 10 employed persons with disabilities are self-employed. While Sean has had some jobs in the community, sadly they didn't work out on a long-term basis.

As Sean's business conceptualized there was never a question that Sean would give back in a way to promote social good. Sean initially made a list of 12 organizations that have provided him with support and advocacy and donated to a one of these organizations each month the first year of his business. Today representatives from three of those organizations are present, RespectAbility, The National Down Syndrome Congress and the National Down Syndrome Society.

Each month his first year, Sean donated a minimum of \$100 to each of the organizations. The first year donations totaled \$1,690, which was 16% of his first year's profit.

At Seanese we measure success differently than most businesses--Seanese hasn't realized enough profit to live off of but the creative outlet for Sean and impact he is making by showing the world that people with Down syndrome can contribute to their community is where we measure the success.

Sean's donation program then evolved when he was contacted by the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area in Northern California for a bulk order of his baby onesies for their new parent gifts. At the same time the disturbing news that Iceland had achieved a 100% abortion rate for babies with Down syndrome broke. Sean knew he wanted to inspire new parents and help their babies and changed his program from cash donations

Sean: To donating baby onesies (Sean holds up a onesie)

To date Sean has had 37 Down syndrome Organizations in 22 states apply for 2,410 baby onesies.

Sean donates \$1 from every shirt sold towards the purchase of the onesies. He also includes a letter to the new parents encouraging them to never give up their dreams for their babies. This program also shows the new parents that someone with Down syndrome is capable of owning his own business as well as giving back with part of his profits. The remainder of the profits fund his ABLE Account.

Thank you for allowing Sean and myself to tell the story of how a microbusiness with very low profits is able to make a difference and give back to the community.

There are many reasons why people with disabilities are unemployed including lack of supports for the employees and employers and the antiquated model of sheltered workshops where many people with disabilities get "stuck", being paid pennies on the dollar. To address these inequities and create more opportunities for employment for people with disabilities, Sean and I ask all of you on the Committee to cosponsor the bipartisan Transformation to Competitive Employment Act (HR 873) and the CAPABILITY Act (HR 3070). I will include more information about these bills in our written testimony.

## Appendix

Profits 2017 \$10,140 Donations totaled \$1690 16% of Net Profits

Profits 2018 \$12,992 Donations totaled \$1,980 15% of Net Profits equaling 360 baby onesies

Profits 2019 YTD \$8,826 Donations YTD \$1,342 15% of Net Profits equaling 244 Baby Onesies

### **Locations of the Down Syndrome Organization who applied for onesies:**

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Madison         | Alabama        |
| Danville        | California     |
| Costa Mesa      | California     |
| Santa Rosa      | California     |
| Fresno          | California     |
| San Luis Obispo | California     |
| San Diego       | California     |
| Rancho          |                |
| Cucamonga       | California     |
| Riverview       | Florida        |
| Atlanta         | Georgia        |
| Bloomington     | Indiana        |
| Ft. Wayne       | Indiana        |
| Kansas City     | Kansas         |
| Bowling Green   | Kentucky       |
| Windham         | Maine          |
| Point of Rocks  | Maryland       |
| Minneapolis     | Minnesota      |
| Omaha           | Nebraska       |
| Lincoln         | Nebraska       |
| Albuquerque     | New Mexico     |
| West Seneca     | New York       |
| Kingston        | New York       |
| Ardsley         | New York       |
| Wilmington      | North Carolina |
| Bismarck        | North Dakota   |
| Dayton          | Ohio           |
| Cincinnati      | Ohio           |
| Dayton          | Ohio           |
| Oklahoma City   | Oklahoma       |
| Pittsburgh      | Pennsylvania   |
| West Chester    | Pennsylvania   |
| Trexlerstown    | Pennsylvania   |
| Wichita Falls   | Texas          |
| Sugarland       | Texas          |
| Holladay        | Utah           |
| Culpepper       | Virginia       |
| Richland        | Washington     |