

Opening Statement of Chairman Steve Chabot (R-OH)
Committee on Small Business
Hearing: “Empowering Small Businesses: The Accelerator Model”
May 3, 2017

Good morning. Thank you all for being with us today.

I call this hearing to order. [tap gavel once]

Before we begin this morning, I would like to welcome Mr. Ron Estes, the newest Member of the House of Representatives to our Committee. Fresh off his special election win and with his background as being the former Kansas State Treasurer, the Small Business Committee is lucky to have him on the team. Welcome.

Over in Statuary Hall, there’s a statue of Thomas Edison. The people of Ohio placed it in the Capitol, because while he may have done his most famous work in New Jersey, he is, like the greatest Americans, an Ohio native.

[that's for all the visiting Ohioans in the room with us today].

The statue depicts Edison holding his invention that changed the world: the light bulb. Speaking about his career as an inventor and the varying degrees of success he had along the way, Edison famously said, *“I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.”*

Edison knew that the power of American innovation wasn't always found in the resulting product. It's found in the process.

That process is what we're really here to talk about today.

As American businesses and entrepreneurs have worked to bring about economic recovery over the last decade, business accelerators have emerged as an inspiring and effective force.

With an end goal of pitching their ideas to a field of investors during a demo day, accelerators put company teams through a fixed-term, cohort based program that focuses on mentorships.

In effect, these are entrepreneurs helping entrepreneurs, small businesses helping small businesses—seeing what works, what hasn't worked, and what can be learned from it.

While the accelerator model is not entirely new, it has really materialized over the last few years and can be seen throughout the nation. Many of us have heard about the successful high-tech accelerators out of Silicon Valley, but there is so much more to the story.

While they are operating all over the country with an overall goal of accelerating growth, they often times have different focuses.

Some are concentrating on economic development within a geographic area like my hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio.

Some are dedicated to female entrepreneurs.

The process the accelerators use to take entrepreneurs through their programs is making a difference. It's the power of experience coming alongside the newly inspired and helping them turn their idea into action. Helping to make that crucial business connection. Helping to advance a funding opportunity. Helping to achieve success.

At this Committee, we like to say that every small business started with an idea, and with success, that idea turns into jobs. Business accelerators give us a close-up look at that process.

As we celebrate National Small Business Week in our Committee, on Capitol Hill and across the country, it is great to have such an impressive group of American innovators before us today.

Each one is directly involved with the running and the operation of an accelerator.

I am looking forward to hearing from them directly. Hearing about their ideas and their stories. It's my hope that we all come away today encouraged and reminded that we have much to learn from our entrepreneurs and the processes they pioneer.

I appreciate all of you for being here today. I look forward to your testimony.

I now yield to Ranking Member, Ms. Velázquez, for her opening remarks.