

MESSERLI | KRAMER

TO: Senator Bobby Joe Champion, Senate District 59
95 University Avenue West
Minnesota Senate Building, Office 3401
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: NEON Food Business Incubator
Senate File 490

Dear Senator Champion,

On behalf of the Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON), we want to thank you for your continued support of the organization and the ongoing commitment to North Minneapolis. By building and supporting a diverse and multi-cultural community of entrepreneurs, the increased business development brings Northside-grown wealth and vibrancy home to North Minneapolis.

Included in this packet are nineteen success stories from local residents who have worked with NEON to start and grow their businesses. These letters not only describe the success of these businesses but also speak of the important work NEON has done and continues to do. Our partners speak in strong support of NEON's bonding request for a food business incubator, which would provide equitable opportunities to expand businesses and better serve the North Minneapolis community. As one business owner stated, "when I heard about the 22k square foot facility, the hairs on my arms stood up. A facility of that magnitude would help those aspiring to become food truck entrepreneurs and would be a perfect platform to master our craft."

Thank you again for your continuous support of NEON and work being done in the North Minneapolis community. If there are any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to contact me.

Sincerely,



Patrick Hynes
Attorney, Messerli & Kramer
612.360.5110

MESSERLI | KRAMER

TO: Representative Esther Agbaje, House District 59B
100 Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard
State Office Building, Office 437
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: NEON Food Business Incubator
House File 191

Dear Representative Agbaje,

On behalf of the Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON), we want to thank you for your continued support of the organization and the ongoing commitment to North Minneapolis. By building and supporting a diverse and multi-cultural community of entrepreneurs, the increased business development brings Northside-grown wealth and vibrancy home to North Minneapolis.

Included in this packet are nineteen success stories from local residents who have worked with NEON to start and grow their businesses. These letters not only describe the success of these businesses but also speak of the important work NEON has done and continues to do. Our partners speak in strong support of NEON's bonding request for a food business incubator, which would provide equitable opportunities to expand businesses and better serve the North Minneapolis community. As one business owner stated, "when I heard about the 22k square foot facility, the hairs on my arms stood up. A facility of that magnitude would help those aspiring to become food truck entrepreneurs and would be a perfect platform to master our craft."

Thank you again for your continuous support of NEON and work being done in the North Minneapolis community. If there are any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to contact me.

Sincerely,



Patrick Hynes
Attorney, Messerli & Kramer
612.360.5110

To Whom this May Concern,

Wha' Jamaican LLC was born in North Minneapolis, and cultivated on the West Broadway Avenue corridor. I(Angelo Williamson) garnered a host of business knowledge, and training on the "How To" in starting a business from N.E.O.N.. I did this by enrolling in NEON's "Starting a Small Business" class in 2014. Simultaneously, I was doing research and development on my products. Learning from the community focused small business support team/company at NEON has been imperative to the success and pandemic survival of my business. Writing a business plan was their top priority for me as the owner. Their second support came in the way of helping me establish the brand by financially backing the development, and production of our Branding/Logo Design. That initial business plan has been the roadmap to which I refer back to in order to stay the course to further my business goals. Though, I had to make modifications to the mission, we did survive covid!

I teach, operate, and grew this business in North Minneapolis, and desire to hire, and retain employees that are primarily from that community. In Fact, this is a primary goal of Wha' Jamaican; to Create Jobs in impoverished communities such as North Minneapolis.

NEON has been and will continue to be a resource that I look to first, because of the trust I have in their mission, and integrity. I believe that I still have much to learn from the staff at NEON that will assist my Business Goals. I find that their pursuits are in alignment with the immediate needs of my business as we are growing to meet the "Food Desert" needs in North Minneapolis. There are many goals I have for Wha' Jamaican LLC... and I know NEON supports small businesses, and entrepreneurs. This news of an incubator food space would be a great way for Wha' Jamaican LLC to forge forward towards our goals of creating Jobs, and still having sound advisement and experience in our supportive corner.

All the Best,
Angelo Williamson
Owner, Wha' Jamaican
612.440.1526
whatjam@outlook.com
www.whatjammfg.com

My name is Bernadette Hunter and my business is Highly Favored Delicacies LLC. Our connections with North Minneapolis started with promoting my business to the Northside Barbershops and Beauty Salons. We were in several of the Northside vending events and we started with the first Commercial Kitchen that was in North Minneapolis (Kinder Kitchen) 1206 W. Broadway Ave. That kitchen is no longer being used for Northside Community Businesses looking for Commercial space. Also, my place of Worship is in North Minneapolis and our church host the Neighborhood "National Night Out" event every year for the Northside Community.

I wish I had known about NEON sooner because it would have saved me a lot of money, trouble and heart-ache. My first encounter with NEON was in 2021. At that time I was trying to get into the Mall of America because they were offering BIPOC Store owners Rent-Free Space for 3 Months. This was to get businesses back on their feet after the civil unrest in Minnesota.

I didn't think about everything I would need to become a part of this, all I knew was this was a great opportunity to get my business back up and running. NEON stepped right in, pairing me with two people of excellence (Maypa Yang and Felipe Galvan), they knew exactly what I needed and how to accomplish the task. NEON gave my business a Grant to purchase the Commercial Freezer needed to be in the store, showed me how to get the license for the MOA and showed me software to keep up with my sells. Yes I'm an Entrepreneur and like many others we have great ideas, but NEON was the key. NEON knows what it takes to get you where you need to be legally and in a professional manner.

February 27, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I am the owner and brewer of FoxBucha, LLC, a small-batch artisanal kombucha brewing business. I currently operate under the Cottage Food Laws for MN which allow for me to brew the kombucha in my home and sell directly to consumers. I have been brewing kombucha for the past 10 years and began selling on a very small scale to friends and neighbors about 5 years ago.

I am originally from Seattle, WA but moved to Minneapolis in 2019 and have come to call it home. I am located in Northeast Minneapolis, which has been undergoing a craft brewing renaissance for the past several years and though my product is non-alcoholic, I consider FoxBucha to be part of and inspired by the culture and business opportunities this environment offers.

Having received lots of positive feedback and growing interest in my product over the years, I recently decided that 2023 was going to be my year to expand the business. I began attending workshops through NEON a few years ago but it was in December 2022 that I finally applied and was accepted to have a designated business consultant guide me as I undergo this process of expansion. The guidance, information, and advice I've received from NEON has been invaluable and gives me so much more confidence as I break out into the business world, never having had any experience with entrepreneurship before. Additionally, I was the recipient of a laptop that was provided to NEON through a grant that was intended to support new entrepreneurs with the necessary computational hardware to running a small business.

As a Cottage Food producer, I am limited to where and how I make my sales. I am currently restricted to selling directly to consumers from my home and/or at community events like farmers markets. Needless to say, this is a highly time and labor-intense way of producing sales. Having access to the commercial kitchen space made available through NEON's expansion would be invaluable to my business. Being able to brew and package my kombucha in a commercial space would enable me to sell my product in grocery stores, cafes, and restaurants without having to come up with the massive cash influx or financial risk that would be required to build or rent my own space. Additionally, it would give me a network of other food business entrepreneurs with whom I could share experiences and knowledge.

I have truly found the support, resources, and guidance I have received from NEON has and I believe will continue to be invaluable and I urge any and all interested or vested parties to continue supporting their work, including their planned expansion to provide a multi-functional food incubator site in North Minneapolis.

Sincerely,

Ellen Fitzharris

Owner and Brewer of FoxBucha, LLC

NEON SUPPORT LETTER

My name is Florence Karp. I am the CEO and founder of Chef FLO-K Foods located in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. I have been in business since 2016. Chef FLO-K Foods manufacture delicious Afric Sauce; an authentic traditional African sauce for convenient home-made cooking.

I have been a NEON client since 2016 when I started my business. I received all the necessary trainings on starting and growing a food business from NEON.

NEON helped me to get my product from kitchen recipe to the retail stores.

When I decided to work with a co-manufacturer, NEON was there to guided me through the process. NEON has been helping me to manage the challenges that come with working with co-manufacturers.

NEON helped me to stay in business by financially supporting my business during Covid-19.

I receive ongoing technical assistance and support from NEON and NEON's network of providers.

At NEON, you are in business for yourself and not by yourself.

I am very excited about NEON's business incubator because it will provide us the food entrepreneurs the opportunity to scale from idea to large production and more.

In fact, the NEON incubator will make the challenging process of starting a food business and getting a product from kitchen recipe to the retail stores, very easy and convenient for us all.

Sincerely,


Florence Karp – CEO Chef FLO-K Foods LLC.

Dear Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON),

I am writing this letter to express my strong support for your initiative to build a 22,000 square foot food business incubator. As a grower and producer of ethnic African vegetables, our business Better Greens LLC understands firsthand the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in North Minneapolis, particularly those who operate in a food desert.

Our community has long been in need of a reliable and affordable space to produce, prepare and distribute fresh and healthy foods. The food business incubator you are building will provide exactly that, with affordable shared commercial kitchen spaces, private kitchen spaces, a community food hall, cold and dry storage, and a food research classroom. Furthermore, with on-site food industry business advisors, Better Greens and other food entrepreneurs in the area will have access to expert support and guidance.

Better Greens LLC is proud to have received business support services, grant awards and skills training from NEON in the past. These resources have been invaluable in helping us build and grow our business, and we are excited to see what opportunities the food business incubator will bring. With the additional resources and support provided by the incubator, we believe that Better Greens LLC will be able to expand our offerings and reach more customers in the community.

Overall, I believe that the food business incubator is an essential component in building a healthier, more equitable food system in North Minneapolis. It will provide much-needed resources and support to local food entrepreneurs, and help improve access to fresh and healthy foods in our community. I fully support NEON's efforts in building this important project, and I look forward to the many benefits it will bring to North Minneapolis.

Sincerely,

Funwi Tita
Cofounder Better Greens LLC

To: NEON (Northside Economic Opportunity Network)
1007 W. Broadway
Minneapolis, MN 55411

From: Honey's Soul Food & Bakery
PO Box 583252
Minneapolis, MN 55458

Subject: Support Letter for Food Business Incubator

To whom it may concern:

I am the owner of Honey's Soul Food & Bakery, Honey. I'd like to start by sharing a little bit about myself and why I started my business. I have always had an entrepreneur mindset. I received my cosmetology license in High School at Simeon Career Academy in Chicago. This was my first self-employment business. I had a toxic home life and ended up homeless for 3 years after high school. When life got in the way, I began a security career that lasted over 15 years. I was working security, but I didn't have a passion for it. I stayed in school and obtained an A.A.S in Business Administration. Honey's is an LLC I started after pinpointing what business I wanted to own while in school for Business Management. I had been disappointed many times from various restaurants in Minneapolis. I started cooking all the time, and then I had the idea, "I should share this with other people". Although I've been cooking since I was five, I decided to take the time to learn and improve my skill set. I like to do things in order, so I received an A.A.S. in Culinary Arts at Hennepin Technical College in December of 2018 and started my company as well. I have connected with programs like NEON and West Broadway Coalition on the North side of Minneapolis. They help me with technical information, proper licensing, community events and volunteer opportunities, grants and provide other financing guidance.

Honey's Soul Food and Bakery has a standard of excellence that is unmatched where I live. It is a high demand for soul food in the Minneapolis North side neighborhood and surrounding area, so I am necessary. Even though my progress has been slow, in large part due to COVID, it has been steady, and

everyone loves my food. I have a lot of returning customers and gain more every time I work a new event.

I had a hard time finding a commercial kitchen to work from after the pandemic. There was only one affordable kitchen available in the area before the pandemic and they closed permanently. At this time, I had intended to serve hot food to gradually grow my business and I couldn't find a shared commercial kitchen to use for 2 years. I have had to pivot my business a few times and even began a Seasoning line. I finally asked my church if I could use their commercial kitchen and finally at the end of year 2022, they said yes. I am grateful to have a starting point to grow my offerings, but, I will still be limited by other events that take place at the church. I need the NEON food business incubator to really accomplish my goals, grow and thrive.

Thank you,

Honey Price
Owner
www.HoneySoulFoodBakery.com



NUTRITION BEYOND BOUNDARIES

March 1, 2023

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to support NEON's plan to bring a food business center to North Minneapolis.

I am pleased to add Life Juices to the list of small businesses that are in support of NEON's work as an advocate for entrepreneurs and their proposal to the city of Minneapolis to build a Food business incubator for the North Minneapolis community. Their plan to address food insecurity and economic empowerment through their development project aligns well with the immediate needs of the community and the needs of small businesses and entrepreneurs. As a small business owner, I have experienced the impact that NEON's business development support has had on my own business and have witnessed the impact their counseling and training has had on the growth and successes of other local businesses as well.

Also, given the many health inequities and socio-economic disparities that permeate the Northside community, now is critical time to provide "targeted resources" to support business ownership before wealth gaps begin to grow even wider due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social uprisings of 2020. Again, I wholeheartedly support this proposal and look forward to partnering with NEON to identify potential ways to address food insecurities in North Minneapolis.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this worthy endeavor. If you need any additional information, please contact me via email at lifejuices@lifejuiceus.com

Sincerely,
Kali Terry
Kali Terry



To whom it may concern, I write this letter with hopes that it may encourage those that read it to provide N.E.O.N. with the necessary resources to further help those of us who aspire to become successful in their endeavor of becoming entrepreneurs. My name is Lamar McPherson owner/operator of "A Taste of Philly" which is an authentic Cheese steak company originated in Philadelphia. I moved to North Minneapolis at the beginning of the year to start a food truck business. Not knowing much about the industry, I was introduced to a current client of NEON by the name of Jada Williams. Jada in turn introduced me to the NEON resource center and explained to me how helpful they are to those in the community that are looking to start small businesses. In doing so I met Ann Fox while participating in a "Thinking About Business" workshop which was extremely informative and at the time Ann ran the class! The second class that was offered was "Starting a food business 101" which was recommended to me by Jada, which turned out to be an excellent class. The instructor Philpee and the guest from score help put things into perspective for me. Ann Fox was designated as my business advisor, which in a short span of time has helped me look into different ways to promote and market my business. When she told me about the building, the 22k square foot facility (Incubator) , the hairs on my arms stood up. A facility of that magnitude would help those aspiring to become food truck entrepreneurs and would be a perfect platform to master our craft at food preparation, safety and cooking! I myself think I speak for all when I say the Incubator is well needed and would be deeply appreciated in the North Minneapolis community.

Sincerely

Lamar A, McPherson

Owner and Operator of "A Taste Of Philly"

Hello,

My name is Maggie Locke and I worked with NEON to create my business - Mini's Masala - so that I could sell Indian food at local farmers markets last summer. NEON helped me to navigate the processes and licenses that were necessary and also helped to get me a grant to get my business off the ground. I so appreciate their support. I would like to grow my business and make it more doable. In order to do that, I need to find commercial kitchen space in the Twin Cities. While there are commercial spaces for rent here, many of them have requirements that are hard to meet, cost too much, or only allow certain categories of vendors. I know that NEON's incubator will welcome aspiring food business owners. They will provide a feasible and affordable option because they want us to succeed. I will very much appreciate NEON's incubator space so that I can consider growing my business to sell tea and spices commercially and to continue with markets. I am very thankful for what NEON has helped me with already and look forward to working with them in the future.

--Maggie Locke

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of K's Revolutionary Catering and More, please accept this letter of support to Northside Economic Opportunity Network in their application for The Food Business Incubator.

K's Revolutionary Catering & More has been serving the Twin Cities with a focus on North Mpls for eight years. Our catering services offer

culturally appropriate and inclusive menu items made from whole ingredients with integrity; which in turn supports the extinction of preventable diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity. We have an added educational component where we venture with other locally owned wellness companies and like minds to offer demonstrations, lectures, and more.

K's Revolutionary Catering is also the home of Stay Well Tonic - a naturally sweetened ginger & turmeric drink served hot or cold. Stay Well Tonic has a host of positive benefits and tastes really good.

When we learned about NEON's proposal to build a food incubator that can house active food businesses struggling to find affordable, clean, local, and sustainable solutions to stay in business; educate up and coming entrepreneurs on how to run a business from A-Z; support those businesses in a tangible way while creating an environment where they can also learn from fellow entrepreneurs in the same space; create desperately needed career/jobs on the Northside which could easily turn into a generational starting point for those who may not want to or have the opportunity for advanced education; all while having a beautiful addition to a reimagined North Mpls - K's Revolutionary Catering & More was in.

Without NEON, I'm not sure if we would've made it through the pandemic. They have not only helped us financially, but they have taught us how to build a sustainable business organically. The skills we've gained by working with them are absolutely priceless, and we are overjoyed with the opportunity to not only be apart of this historic project, but to give back by fully supporting our fellow entrepreneurial colleagues, collaborators, and community.

Hi Ann!

I would love to support NEON FOOD INCUBATOR.

Here is my letter of support.

My name is Mia, I am the owner of Ichigo Tokyo Crepes in Minneapolis. I would like to support NEON FOOD INCUBATOR.

I was very fortunate to have NEON support to start my business. At NEON they trust me to have gone forward to make my dream come true. It was very important for me to build confidence about my unknown future of business. Without their help, I wouldn't be able to start my business. I appreciated their support of finding pop-up locations, guidance about business licenses and business lawyer services. NEON's connection and collaboration of the business ideas are beyond my expectation. They had good neighborhood relationships and great experience about business incubators. I'm more than 100% recommending NEON for startups, companies and businesses.

I will try to be there on Monday Mar 20th for support.

Ann, you support me a lot, I would love to support you as much as possible.

So please tell me whatever I can to help you.

Mia

-Mia Oi-

Ichigo Tokyo Crepes

<https://ichigotokyostylecrepes.com/>

929-515-1521

From: Morris Morris <morris910@yahoo.com>

Sent: Wednesday, March 1, 2023 9:51 AM

To: MayPa Yang <MayPa@neon-mn.org>

Subject: Letter of support

United food organization Sichoa Cummings and Jimmy Morris. Great news it's amazing that Neon understands the need for a building of this nature. This building development is the link that will bridge the gap for food entrepreneurs. Neon you have your finger on the pulse of the community and the insight and fortitude to have the vision moving forward again SOS right that off looking forward to the future. UNITED FOOD ORGANIZATION.

To Whom it may concern

I will move on with the letter process.

I will do my best and more for this project.

Kindly count me in.

Let me know if there is anything else, I can do to help.

Nonso Chin Chin Delights

My name is Queana Ivory. I own Fresh Eats, a fruit forward specialty sauce company. My sauce flavors are sweet, spicy and very unique. I have been working with NEON for about 2 years. Ann is the best mentor I could ask for. She has helped me in every important milestone of my business. My business is growing and the most important thing I need now is a commercial kitchen. For me to get into the grocery store shelves I must have an affordable commercial kitchen to produce my sauces. Right now there is no space available to me so I wait for something to open or NEON to build their kitchen space. I am super happy to support this building and I see the impact it will have on our community. I need this kitchen space for my business to grow.

Rhya Moore

Jammin House of Jerk LLC

Waaaa Gwaaann, my name is Rhya Moore I am the CEO/chef of The House of Jerk. I have been a part of the North Minneapolis community over 15 years. Over the last 3 years my small business has been thriving and growing everyday right in the heart of North Minneapolis.

I appreciate the guidance and opportunity that NEON offers to small businesses whether they are upcoming or are well known and just need a little assistance. They help the community so much with the programs they currently offer I can only imagine the opportunities this new project will bring.

As NEON continues to help my business prosper, the idea of having a shared commercial kitchen right in North Minneapolis is a dream come true. this will would help so much, Not only just for myself but other small businesses in my field who need access to commercial kitchens.

You have my support! And I hope you guys and can support us by blessing us with this amazing new opportunity!

Thank you

Im Dedicated to Success!

To Whom This May Concern,

My name is Takilah Swearegene owner of A.R.T Frullata where we make fresh fruit smoothies and cold press juice and salads. I have been a resident of north Minneapolis for over 10+ years. I truly believe that north Minneapolis is a food desert we don't have many healthy food alternative choices so a change is do sooner than later I believe that My business would help introduce other healthy choices to my community. I joined the Neon family back in 2022 and I say family because it's been nothing but a blessing and more. The business one on one class was great. At Neon they give you the tools and the recourses you need to succeed in your business because they walk and work with you every step of the way, getting your business started and or expanding your business plus you also get a business advisor.

The incubator space is needed because it give the Northside Community more reliable and affordable opportunities for commercial kitchen space that we lack in our Community and along with this space the incubator space will help generate more revenue for the food entrepreneur's of the northside community's. With that being said my business A.R.T Frullata would definitely be one more shining example of the importance of the Neon Program and Incubator Space that's needed in our community.

Thank you!

Takilah Swearegene



QUEBRACHO Authentic Argentinian Cuisine

E: info@quebrachomn.com

W: www.quebrachomn.com

Todo el Mundo a la Mesa™



Tuesday, February 28, 2023

Attn: NEON Minneapolis

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Belén Rodríguez. I am the Founder & CEO of Quebracho Empanadas, a Twin Cities-based startup specializing in Argentinian empanadas, sold frozen in grocery stores, supermarkets, and specialty markets across Minnesota and the region.

The purpose of this letter is to tell you about the services I have received from NEON and how the organizations' assistance helped me grow a sustainable business that not only survived the pandemic but is thriving and has gained shelf space at 150 stores and counting.

I first became a client of NEON in 2017, in the early days of planning what was to be a farmers market booth. From one-on-one business advising and educational workshops, to pro-bono opportunities with subject matter experts and micro grants, NEON helped me ensure my business could launch successfully in the winter of 2018. During the pandemic, they helped my business once again by securing emergency relief funding, and later on they collaborated with another local non-profit to help me secure what would be my first official business loan.

After 5 years of managed growth, we are quickly approaching the point in our growth journey where we need to take another step forward. We have become a brand that consumers, grocers and distributors recognize and want to buy, and have entered a cycle where not one thing can advance on its own –access to expertise, financing and scalability have all become necessities that need to move forward at the same pace; the latter being of utmost importance, as facility inventory is particularly hard to find for companies my size.

A space like the NEON Food Incubator could be the difference between a business continuing to grow sustainably or not. The model that NEON is working on is second to none and far from being a generic kitchen for businesses to come and go, it's a well-planned holistic incubator that will be key to a thriving North Minneapolis community.

Sincerely,

Belén Rodríguez

Quebracho Founder & CEO

NEON SUPPORT LETTER

My name is Florence Karp. I am the CEO and founder of Chef FLO-K Foods located in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. I have been in business since 2016. Chef FLO-K Foods manufacture delicious Afric Sauce; an authentic traditional African sauce for convenient home-made cooking.

I have been a NEON client since 2016 when I started my business. I received all the necessary trainings on starting and growing a food business from NEON.

NEON helped me to get my product from kitchen recipe to the retail stores.

When I decided to work with a co-manufacturer, NEON was there to guided me through the process. NEON has been helping me to manage the challenges that come with working with co-manufacturers.

NEON helped me to stay in business by financially supporting my business during Covid-19.

I receive ongoing technical assistance and support from NEON and NEON's network of providers.

At NEON, you are in business for yourself and not by yourself.

I am very excited about NEON's business incubator because it will provide us the food entrepreneurs the opportunity to scale from idea to large production and more.

In fact, the NEON incubator will make the challenging process of starting a food business and getting a product from kitchen recipe to the retail stores, very easy and convenient for us all.

Sincerely,


Florence Karp – CEO Chef FLO-K Foods LLC.

Jada N. Williams

The Bougie Waffle
763.458.7069

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Jada Williams, Owner of The Bougie Waffle. I am writing to support NEON and its plans to create a food incubator space in North Minneapolis.

I grew up in North Minneapolis. I have benefitted from being raised in a community where I saw many of the people born and raised here make their impact on this area either through community development, social engagement, and entrepreneurship.

Growing up, I had the luxury of shopping in stores and restaurants and participating in activities owned and organized by my neighbors, people I would see mowing their lawns, and at the park. I never contemplated the hurdles those small business owners must have endured, the trials and opposition they faced. I just got my little candy bag, chicken wings, or ice cream and went about my day.

What I do remember from those individuals is their commitment to doing business right here in the community. They knew my name, they looked out for me, and even when I didn't want them to, they protected me from myself.

Those experiences were a huge reason why once I became an adult, I chose to work with young people in our community; to continue that legacy of community care I benefitted from as a child. Over the years, that has taken many forms. After decades of working in public service, I pursued a lifelong dream of owning a Northside business.

NEON was the first organization I reached out to. I had seen many businesses that I frequented close, and others come and swiftly go. From the start, I knew I wanted to create a solid foundation for my business to last. NEON was, has been, and will remain a key component to ensuring that I can impact the community in the ways I saw the entrepreneurs before me. They have been pivotal to my journey to becoming a successful entrepreneur in North Minneapolis. In the last year, they have provided me with 1-1 business advising, education, cohorts, and access to a food cart, which allowed me to test the market for the viability of my product. They have provided me with opportunities to secure grant funds that allowed us to acquire the equipment needed to compete in the food service space. They understand the struggles of BIPOC entrepreneurs as they navigate the precarious systems making our journey more difficult.

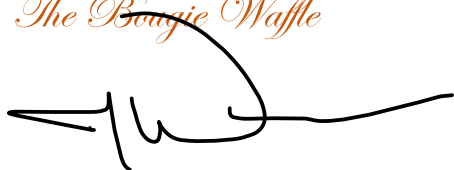
There is a connectedness between NEON and the surrounding community, reminiscent of my younger days. Their vision to transform North Minneapolis and the

surrounding area into a prosperous, visible, sustainable, and highly diverse multicultural community of entrepreneurs is a beacon to future owners.

I am honored to support NEON in this revolutionary incubator space. As a business owner, NEON's support has made a difference. I feel so much pride in the community I am from. NEON bringing this one-of-a-kind space to the heart of our community will ensure that others will not only dream of but see a space where their visions can come to life.

Sincerely,
Jada N. Williams

The Bougie Waffle

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jada N. Williams', written over the business name.