



Cybersecurity: Challenges and Opportunities for Small Business
Tuesday, August 15, 2023 @ 14:30
National Cybersecurity Center: 3650 N. Nevada Ave., COS, CO



Statement from Alfred Ortiz
Time Approximately: 5m 40s

Good afternoon, Senator Hickenlooper, staff, and attendees. My name is Alfred Ortiz I am the CEO of CSD Cyber and have over 20 years of cyber and IT experience, moving from corporate America and starting up my business over five-years ago. As a small Colorado based enterprise, I understand what it takes to grow a small business. In addition to CSD Cyber, I volunteer with the local Pikes Peak Small Business Development Center as a cyber expert and serve as a member of the board of directors for the local ISSA chapter. I have taught undergraduate and graduate students with a focus on cybersecurity at the University of Colorado, Denver. I have dedicated my working career to helping individuals and firms keep their data safe from threats. My father and grandfather were entrepreneurs, so owning a small business and understanding its demands are embedded into my daily life as I work with people from all facets of our society.

Cybersecurity is an **All-Partisan** issue that affects Americans from every strand of our society as they may be affected personally and professionally. Approximately two-thirds of American business comes from small-business entrepreneurs like me and many attending today and those who's small businesses are affected by Federal legislation. Of these small enterprises, those with less than 50 employees, 47% of them have no budget for cybersecurity. Adding to this, approximately 76% of SMBs (or 25.2 million businesses) have experienced a cyber-attack in the last six months. Many will not recover. From malware, ransomware, to social engineering and other threats, small firms have more demands with the least number of resources to defend themselves.

CSD Cyber can cite circumstances where we have helped companies at all tiers. In one instance we helped a small bank comply with federal regulations, and a fortune 50 company to do the same. Another time CSD worked with a town to demonstrate the vulnerabilities of their water utility system, so the residents can have safe drinking water. And helped a local gym in securing their wireless network, so their members can listen to their music safely as they work out. At times firms like these don't know where to go for help or are limited on resources and might not know who to trust, they may have to decide on buying that new piece of capital equipment, fly to meet a client or spend on advertising, not thinking about securing their vital data and that of their clients. Advocating for small business, CSD Cyber launched an SMB store on the 4th of July for this very reason, to give SMBs options where they can go to for help with a reasonable price. With larger consulting firms charging over \$500 an hour we hope to change the rules of giving small business a fighting chance. Spending on cybersecurity is a necessity in today's market, yet every firm knows that driving revenues is the lifeblood of their business.

The US Federal Government is the largest buyer of goods and services in our country. With that, our small and medium businesses make up over two-thirds of our economy and should have a fair shake at the table for business.



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When the CHIPS & Science Act was invoked, President Biden stated that it represents “a once-in-a-generation investment in America itself.” With approximately \$57.2 billion to be funded.

One might ask, were set asides for SMBs and minority firms placed in the legislation so larger corporations could contract and fulfil their obligations with this Federal funding?

More importantly, there needs to be considerations for small business to make it easier to participate in the federal bidding process. When it takes three to six months to fill out a bid for an opportunity and another year to 18 months to wait for the award...many small businesses cannot sustain that cycle. If these small enterprises do not sustain themselves with revenues & cybersecurity investment the Federal government has a three-fold problem: 1. Vital data on Americans may be lost to the dark web. 2. For every SBA loan that fails, a person and their family will fall under that burden and lastly the Federal government will lose tax revenues. In short, cybersecurity is an All-American issue that effects American business.

In conclusion, I am here before you with an unwavering commitment to the pivotal realms of cybersecurity, small business prosperity, and legislative foresight. As a CEO, educator, and citizen, I come armed with a wealth of IT experience and the enduring legacy of my family's entrepreneurial spirit. The resonance of our dialogue today reverberates far beyond these walls, underscoring the urgency of safeguarding data in a digital age touching every facet of American society. Through the lens of CSD Cyber's transformative collaborations, I have witnessed firsthand the pressing need for accessible solutions that empower entities of all scales to secure their futures. As we forge ahead into an era of legislative possibilities, let us champion the inclusion of small and minority businesses as integral contributors, fueled by equitable opportunities and streamlined processes. Together, we have the power to reshape the trajectory of our economy, bolstering its very foundation with the resilience of entrepreneurship and the fortified defense of cybersecurity.

Thank you, Senator Hickenlooper, staff, and guests.

I will now hand back my time to the moderator.